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# FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES OF  
BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

**OUT FOR HIMSELF;**  
OR PAVING HIS WAY TO FORTUNE. *By A SELF-MADE MAN.*



"Hurry up, Tom," cried Jack, "we've barely time to finish this job." The two boys got an extra hustle on, and Jack was giving the final tap to the last spike when the locomotive came in sight around the curve.



# Fame and Fortune Weekly

## STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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# OUT FOR HIMSELF

OR,

## PAVING HIS WAY TO FORTUNE

By A SELF-MADE MAN

### CHAPTER I.

#### AN AMBITIOUS BOY.

"Jack," said Mrs. Street, to her son at the supper-table, "Mr. Shuttleworth has offered me the Trent property, rent free, if we will go and live on it until he can find a purchaser for it."

"Did he mother?" replied the bright and stalwart sixteen-year-old boy, in some surprise. "That's the ten-acre farm he foreclosed on and bought in about three months ago."

"I believe it is."

"Mr. Shuttleworth is getting uncommonly liberal in his old age," said the lad. "This is the first time I ever heard of him giving something for nothing."

"Some bad boys set the barn on fire the other night and it burned to the ground. He's afraid the house, a fairly good one, might share the same fate unless he has some one on the premises to look out for it. If we go there, Jessie could look after things when I am out sewing."

"Do you think of accepting Mr. Shuttleworth's offer, mother?"

"Jessie and I have been talking the matter over, and she is rather in favor of it. We are paying \$6 a month for this cottage. We could save that if we went to live on the Trent farm, and \$6 is a large sum of money to us."

"That's right, mother, \$6 looks as big as a mountain these days."

"It does, indeed. If your poor father had lived things would be different. We got along very comfortably before the Lord, in His wisdom, took him from us," said the little widow, wiping a tear from her eye. "Now I have to calculate very closely to make ends meet. The \$6 that you and Jessie earn would hardly see us through, for Willie is dreadfully hard on his shoes and clothes. If it wasn't that Mrs. Shuttleworth, and some of her friends, employed me to make their dresses, I really don't know how we should be able to get along."

"I don't think you're under any special obligations to Mrs. Shuttleworth, mother. You are a good dressmaker, and she gets you cheap—cheaper than she could hire any other good one in town."

"It is true I go to Mrs. Shuttleworth for 75 cents a day, when I ought to get a dollar, but you know it was through her I got Mrs. Smith's work, and also Mrs. Brown's."

"Even so, mother, but Hiram Shuttleworth is well off, and his wife could well afford to pay you what your services are really worth. The trouble with the Shuttleworths is that they look at a dollar two or three times before they let it get away from them. I am surprised that Mr. Shuttleworth didn't ask you to pay two or three dollars a month rent for the Trent farm over and above your services as caretaker."

"He did at first. He wanted me to pay \$2, but I said I could not think of paying any money when the tenure of the place was so uncertain."

"He's been trying to rent or sell that property ever since



he got possession of it, but no one seems to want it. People say he was unnecessarily hard on the Trents to foreclose such a small mortgage as \$500, though it is true they were three years in arrears with their interest. At any rate, he doesn't seem to have made anything by it."

"Did the Trents get anything out of the sale?" asked Mrs. Street.

"I think not, mother. The property is not worth over \$1,000. Mr. Shuttleworth got it for \$700, which just about covered the mortgage, the accrued interest and the expenses of foreclosure."

"Jessie thinks she could raise some chickens there, and I dare say we could grow our own vegetables."

"Sure we could, provided the place isn't sold over our heads. You must consider that, mother. The property is in the market, and Mr. Shuttleworth is liable to find a purchaser any time. In fact, I think it rather a shrewd move on his part to get you to move out there. The house being tenanted will save it from going to ruin. Besides, it will add to the appearance of the place and impress a possible buyer more favorably. I tell you, mother, there are no flies on Hiram Shuttleworth. I have heard he is a man who always manages to get the best of a bargain or a contract, no matter how greatly it may seem to appear in favor of the other person."

"Have you any objection to my moving out there, Jack? You will not have much further to walk to the office than you do now, as it is only a short distance outside the town limits."

"I have no objection, mother. Do just as you think proper. Jessie can do her work there just as well as here. You will save rent money, at any rate, and if we are allowed to remain there eight or ten months we ought to make a few extra dollars off the land. On the whole," said the boy, thoughtfully, "I think it's worth taking a chance."

"That is my opinion, too," said his sister Jessie, a pretty, but delicate-looking girl, two years his senior, who sat on the opposite side of the table, speaking for the first time since the little mother broached the subject.

And so it was decided to accept Hiram Shuttleworth's offer, and move to the Trent farm before the first of the next month.

Jack Street was one of the brightest and most wide-awake boys in the thriving little town of Brentwood.

He was employed as general assistant in a small real estate and insurance agency office on Main Street.

This was the only situation he had held since graduating from the public school about a year before.

He had recently received a dollar raise in his wages, which now amounted to \$3.50, and as his employer had promised him a commission in addition for any business he might turn into the office, he was on the alert to earn this reward.

His sister did work at home for a small manufacturing concern in the town, and earned on the average only \$2.50 per week.

Mrs. Street earned from \$3 to \$4 a week at dressmaking, when employed, though often she had no work at all.

On the whole, the little family just managed to get along without running into debt, and it was a red-letter week when the little mother managed to put a dollar or two aside for a rainy day.

On the morning following the conversation with which this chapter opens, Jack met a boss carpenter named Wells, who had been a friend of his father's.

"Hello, Jack!" he exclaimed, seizing the boy by the hand. "How are you getting on?"

"Pretty good, sir; but I could stand a little additional prosperity without losing my head."

"I believe most of us think the same way. What are you doing?"

Jack told him.

"Well, now, I was thinking of taking out an insurance policy on my life for a couple of thousand. I guess I'll drop around and see your boss about it."

"I can give you all the information you need, Mr. Wells," said Jack, eagerly. "If you're not engaged this evening I'll call at your house and show you the different propositions we have to offer, and point out which I think will be the best for you to take."

"That will be a good deal of trouble for you, won't it, Jack?"

"Not at all, sir. You see, if I insure you myself I'll get a commission, and I can do as well by you as though you went to the office."

"Oh, I see! Well, I'd be glad to put something in your way, my lad. Your father and I were old friends. Come around to-night, then, and bring your documents. I live at 28 Hazel Street."

"Thank you, sir; I'll be there at eight o'clock."

As Jack moved off he ran against his particular friend, Tom Harper, who was a surveyor's assistant.

"Hello, Tom, where have you been for the last week?" asked Jack. "I've been looking for you to call at the house, but you didn't show up."

"Been out of town. The M. & N. Railroad that's going to build a branch line to this place from Bridgewater, hired my boss to assist in making the survey of the right of way, and I've been helping him as usual."

"Where is the depot going to be?"

"On the south side of Washington Street. The company has bought up the whole block of ground on the quiet. The line will cut the Parsons' farm in half."

"You don't say!" exclaimed Jack. "That's not far from the Trent farm."

"About half a mile, I should think."

"By the way, we're going to live on the Trent property until Mr. Shuttleworth sells or rents it."

"Good enough! You'll be close by our house, then."

"That's right. It would be fine if we could only afford to become a fixture there. Perhaps we will, after all, if I can make a little money on the outside. If you hear of



any one who wants his life or house insured just steer me on to him, will you, and I'll consider it a favor?"

"Sure I will. Do you get a commission?"

"Yes. And I'll whack up with you on any business you put me on to."

"Now you're talking! My old man has been doing well lately. I'll see if I can talk him into getting another \$1,000 policy on his life," grinned Tom.

"Thanks. So the railroad is going through the Parsons' farm, is it? From what I know of the property I should think there would have to be some heavy embankment built across that farm to bring the road up to a level."

"I heard my boss say that at least two culverts will have to be built—one across the creek, and the other across the branch of the creek which runs up alongside of the Trent farm. It will take considerable stone filling between here and Middletown to make a solid roadway. I'd like to own an interest in a stone quarry in this neighborhood. I could make a good thing out of it."

"What would you do? Sell the stone to the railroad?"

"The railroad company won't build this branch. They'll let the job out to some contractor. If I had a quarry, the first thing I'd do would be to get a look at the specifications on which the contractor bases his bid. That would give me a general idea of the amount and quality of stone called for in the construction of the line. If it was considerable, I would make it my business to get an interview with the successful bidder—the man to whom the contract was awarded. Then I'd make him an offer of my stone at so much a load. By closing a deal with me the contractor would save the expense of bringing his stone from a distance, and consequently he would see his way to making a larger profit on the job."

"Well, Tom, it's too bad neither you nor me own a stone quarry right around here. If we did we'd be our own bosses instead of working for other people at low pay."

"That's right. It's a fine thing to be one's own master, bet your life."

"I should remark. I'd sooner be out for myself than for somebody else. That is what I mean to be just as soon as I can get a start."

"The trouble is to get a start," replied Tom.

"I shall try to make one for myself. At any rate, I begin to-night. I'm going to call on an old friend of my father's to talk him into insuring his life. I hope to get my first commission out of him."

"Well, I wish you luck, old man. So long!" and the boys parted.

## CHAPTER II.

### KIDNAPPED.

Jack called on Mr. Wells that evening and succeeded in talking that gentleman into signing an application for a \$3,000 endowment policy.

If it went through without a hitch, the boy figured that he would be entitled to about \$100, and consequently he went home feeling like a bird.

Naturally, the first thing he did was to tell his mother and sister of his good luck, and that had a cheering effect upon them, too.

In about a week they moved all their belongings to the house on the Trent property, as it still continued to be known, although it had become the property of Hiram Shuttleworth, one of the legal luminaries of Brentwood.

A board sign standing near the front gate announced that the place was for rent or sale, terms to be had on application at the owner's office on Main Street.

An advertisement to the same effect was occasionally inserted in the local morning daily.

Under these conditions the Street family's tenure to the property was not very encouraging; but still there were many reasons why Mr. Shuttleworth would probably have some trouble about either renting or selling the place—the chief of which was the figure he put upon it.

He wanted \$1,100, two-thirds of which could remain on bond and mortgage, and this, in Jack's opinion, was more than any one was likely to give for it.

The rent he wanted was also proportionately high, and the record of the little farm did not warrant it.

The trouble with Mr. Shuttleworth was that the mighty dollar was the all-absorbing object of his life, and he often cheated himself in his eagerness to grasp it.

A few days after the Streets went to live on the ten-acre farm, Jack met with another piece of good luck—he insured the new Brentwood Hotel against loss by fire, and earned his second commission, though not a very large one, it is true.

The promise of collecting over \$100 in the near future encouraged him to make greater efforts, and during the two weeks that intervened before the life insurance company granted Mr. Wells his policy, Jack made a matter of \$50 more in commissions.

Nearly every evening after he had had his supper, Jack returned to town to interview different people on the subject of life or fire insurance.

This was what he called being "out for himself," and he hustled for all he was worth during the time at his disposal.

On one of these occasions he was returning home about ten o'clock when, as he was passing the residence of Willard Davenport, president of the Brentwood National Bank, he heard a woman scream for help.

"What can be the matter in there?" he asked himself, coming to a dead stop in front of the gate which opened on the walk leading to the front door.

There was a big red touring automobile standing alongside of the curb, and the boy noticed that its bull's-eye lamps were not lighted as the law required.

Mr. Davenport's home was quite a pretentious one, as befitted a gentleman of considerable means, and being situated on the suburbs, the tree-lined street was deserted and lonely at that hour of the night.

As Jack stood irresolutely at the gate, undecided whether



to proceed on his way or not, the cry was repeated with greater shrillness.

It came through a dimly lighted window on the second floor, and seemed as if it had been suddenly choked off.

"I'm afraid there's something wrong in that house. A woman doesn't scream like that for nothing. I'm going to investigate, anyway."

He opened the gate and started for the piazza.

Springing up the steps he stretched out his hand to push the electric bell, when the front door was opened almost in his face and a man, with a mask over his eyes, came out.

He uttered an oath as he saw the boy standing there in the gloom.

Before Jack could make a move or utter a word the masked man struck him a blow in the face, and the lad staggered back and fell upon the veranda.

At the same moment another man, also masked, appeared at the door with the form of a girl, whose head was enveloped in a shawl, in his arms.

"What's up?" demanded the second man, in a hoarse voice, pausing on the threshold and looking down at his companion, who had thrown himself upon Jack and held him pinned to the boards.

"I caught this young monkey standing just beside the door here as I came out," was the reply. "What shall we do with him?"

"Gag him at once to prevent his alarming the neighborhood. Then tie his hands with your handkerchief and bundle him into the auto. He must not be allowed to spread the news of what he has seen at this stage of the game. It might ruin everything."

"All right," replied his associate; "but after you put the girl in the auto you'd better come back and help me."

The fellow pulled Jack's handkerchief out of his pocket and kneeling upon the struggling boy's chest, succeeded in tying it about his mouth.

He was unable, however, with all his strength, to get the boy over on his face so that he could bring his wrists together behind his back and tie them.

He had to wait until his companion came back, and then the pair completed the capture of Jack.

Between them they bore the now helpless boy to the automobile and thrust him under the back seat, upon which the unconscious bundled-up girl lay huddled in a heap.

The fellow who had assaulted Jack took possession of half of the back seat, supporting the limp form of the girl in his arms, while his companion leaped into the front seat, and in a moment more the machine was speeding along the deserted highway toward the country, like a flying phantom, its rapid "chug, chug!" alone breaking the silence of the night.

Jack's sensations, as he lay squeezed into the narrow space under the seat, were not the pleasantest.

The whole affair had taken place so suddenly that he was only just beginning to realize that he was a prisoner in the power of two men who were rascals, past any doubt.

"It seems plain that these fellows are a pair of burglars

who broke into Mr. Davenport's house and were just getting away with their booty when I came up," the boy thought, which showed that he did not know that the object he had indistinctly seen in the second man's arms was a human being and not a bundle of "swag," as he supposed it to be. "I can't imagine why they should take the trouble to carry me off with them," Jack continued, in summing up the situation. "I should think they would have left me bound and gagged on the veranda. Maybe they'll dump me out somewhere along the road and leave me to shift for myself."

Mile after mile, however, was reeled off along the lonesome highway, which threaded the sparsely settled and mountainous district to the south of Brentwood, and no stop was made to dispense with the prisoner under the seat.

Jack, of course, had no idea where the auto was speeding to; all he knew was that it was kiting along at a mighty lively clip.

After an hour the machine turned off the highway into the hills, and its progress became slower.

Winding in and out among the boulders and other obstructions it ascended by easy stages to an opening between two of the hills, and then descended by an equally tortuous course into a little land-locked valley, covered with thick green grass and comparatively level.

At the far end of the valley stood a rude two-story, unpainted dwelling under the shadow of the highest hill of the chain.

In front of this house the automobile stopped and the man who had acted as the chauffeur dismounted from his seat and pounded on the door.

A tall, bony and unprepossessing woman appeared after an interval, with a lamp in her hand.

"Here we are, Mrs. Meiggs," said the man, curtly.

"Have you brought——" began the woman.

"The girl? Of course we have. We are ready to turn her over to your protecting care. See that you treat her well while she remains here. But be sure that she does not give you the slip."

"Don't fear that I'll give her half a chance to slip out of her cage," replied the woman, with an evil smile.

"Where is your husband?"

"In bed—the lazy brute."

"Then rouse him up. I want to see him. First of all, you'd better pilot Curley, with the girl, upstairs to the room you have prepared for her reception. She'll be dead to the world for some hours yet. When she comes to, you can make her understand that her detention all depends upon her father. If he stumps up the reward quick, without raising any fuss or notifying the police, she'll be returned soon. If he starts in to make trouble for us, then things won't be quite so pleasant for her. That's all, I guess, for the present. Curley will remain to help the good work along at this end, while I will attend to the other branch of the business."

The speaker made a sign to his companion, whom he



had referred to as Curley, and that individual got out of the auto with the insensible girl in his arms.

Mrs. Meiggs nodded to him, as if he was no stranger to her, and after holding the door for him to enter the house, preceded him up the uncarpeted staircase to a room on the floor above, where he deposited his burden on a rude bed.

Jack, in his close quarters under the rear seat, had easily heard every word the leader of the enterprise spoke.

Its purport rather astonished him.

"This looks like a case of kidnapping," he mused. "Evidently these rascals have abducted Cassie Davenport, the banker's only child. They intend to squeeze him out of a wad of money unless he refuses to treat with them. It's pretty tough on Mr. Davenport, and on Cassie, too. But I wonder why they have brought me out here also? They can't expect to make anything out of me. Maybe they were afraid I could furnish a description of them and their auto. Perhaps they think I saw more than I really did. I may be kept a prisoner here until this scheme has been brought to a head. That will be hard on me, as well as on mother and sis."

The man who appeared to be engineering the scheme did not enter the house, but paced up and down before the door until Curley came back, accompanied by the husband of Mrs. Meiggs.

"Here I am, Mulbrook," said Meiggs, stepping outside. "My wife said you wanted to see me."

"So I do. The girl is upstairs, as I suppose you know."

"I know it," replied Meiggs.

"Have you a safe place for another prisoner I want you to hold on to until this job has been disposed of to our satisfaction?"

"Another prisoner?" exclaimed Meiggs, looking at the auto and not seeing any one in it.

"Yes. A boy, whose mouth we must close for the present. He almost interrupted the game, but we nabbed him in time to prevent complications. He must be kept here until further notice. Now, have you a place to put him where he can't give you the slip?"

"Yes. We can lock him up in the cellar. He'll be safe enough there."

"Very good. I'll hold you and Curley responsible for his keeping."

"He won't get away," replied Meiggs, confidently. "There's no way out of the cellar except through a trap in the kitchen floor, and we'll put a weight on that he couldn't move if he was the strong man of a side-show."

"All right," answered Mulbrook. "It's up to you to see that he's a fixture."

"Where have you got him?" asked Meiggs, in a puzzled tone.

"Under the rear seat of the auto," replied Curley. "You'd better get a stout piece of rope and we'll tie his arms in good shape. At present there's only a handkerchief around his wrists."

Curley and Mulbrook talked together in a low tone while Meiggs was absent, hunting up the piece of rope.

When he came back with it they yanked Jack from the auto, bound his arms in ship-shape fashion, and marched him through a dark hallway into the kitchen at the back of the house.

Meiggs raised the trap in the floor, and taking the lamp in his hand preceded Curley and his prisoner down the short flight of steps to an excavation dug out of the earth, which answered for a small cellar.

"I think it would be a good idea to tie him to one of these posts, then it would not be necessary to put any weight upon the trap," said Curley.

"That's what we'll do," replied Meiggs. "He won't need so much watchin' then."

So, without more ado, they tied him to the post, removed the gag from across his mouth so he could breathe freely, and without addressing a word to the boy they took up the lamp and departed for the regions above, leaving Jack alone in the dark.

### CHAPTER III.

#### IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY.

Jack passed a mighty unpleasant night in that cellar.

"If they intend to keep me tied up in this fashion right along I'll be a wreck when they get ready to let me go. I'll have to put up a stiff kick with those chaps when they come down here again."

When his eyes got accustomed to the gloom of the place he saw that, with the exception of a few boxes and a half-broken flour barrel, the cellar was quite bare.

There was no flooring nor walls to the place, only the bare earth.

The beams supporting the kitchen floor were within a couple of feet of his head, and for some time after he had been left alone he heard the heavy footfalls of the two men and the lighter ones of Mrs. Meiggs, passing and re-passing above.

Finally he heard them no more, and rightly concluded that the occupants of the house had retired for the night.

After a time he tried to work his hands out of his bonds, but the attempt was a failure.

He dozed off to sleep at last, to wake up a dozen times, owing to the uncomfortable position he was in.

Finally tired nature asserted herself and he slept through until something falling on the floor over his head awoke him to a full realization of his surroundings.

It was still as dark as pitch in his prison, but the foot-steps above gave him the idea that morning had come.

In the course of an hour the trap was lifted and Meiggs, carrying a battered tray with dishes on it, and Curley the lamp, descended into the cellar.

"Bring one of those boxes over here," said Meiggs to his companion.

Curley got one and placed it on the spot indicated by Meiggs with his foot.

The tray was deposited upon it and the lamp on the floor.

"Well, youngster," said Curley, with a grin, "how did you spend the night in your chamber de luxe?"



"How would you have spent it if you'd been tied to a post like I am now?" replied Jack.

"Well, that's what you get for buttin' in where you were not wanted. What did you do it for?"

"Because I heard that girl you've kidnapped scream for help."

"Oh, you heard her, did you? You've got pretty sharp ears. How could you hear her 'way out on the sidewalk? Are you sure you didn't see us come up in the auto and then try to follow us into the house?"

"I'm sure I didn't do anything of the kind."

"Cut it out," growled Meiggs, "and let's unloose him and give him a chance to eat somethin'. As long as he's here we've got to feed him."

So Jack was released from his unpleasant situation and permitted to exercise his cramped limbs.

Curley took the precaution, however, to stand between the boy and the stairs so as to prevent him from making a break for freedom, if such an idea occurred to him.

"Now, then," said Meiggs, roughly, "fall to and eat your breakfast so we can tie you up again."

"I'd like to know why I've been brought to this place to be kept a prisoner," said Jack, as he took up a piece of bread and butter and began to eat it.

"If you can't guess the reason we'll never tell you," replied Curley, with a coarse laugh.

"It isn't a square deal," replied Jack.

"It's your own fault for nosin' around things that didn't concern you."

"How long are you going to keep me here?"

"You'll stay here till we get ready to let you go."

"When will that be?"

"None of your business. Come now, hurry up; we're not goin' to stay here all day."

"Are you going to tie me again?"

"You bet we are!" replied Meiggs.

"Well, it's a mean thing to do. You've got me safe enough here without making matters unnecessarily hard for me. There's no windows for me to crawl out of it."

"We might as well let him stay loose," interposed Curley. "We can put a weight on the trap to hold it down."

Meiggs offered no objection to this suggestion, and as soon as Jack had finished the coffee they departed with the tray and lamp, leaving the boy free to amuse himself as best he could.

The first thing he did was to examine his prison closely with the aid of some matches he had in his pocket.

"I'll bet a dollar I could dig myself out of this place with the help of one of those barrel staves if I had time enough. The earth is not so hard."

This idea occurred to Jack the moment he saw the real character of the cellar.

"I'll make a start at once. I can knock off whenever I hear the trap raised, so they will not be likely to get on to what I am doing."

He picked up one of the staves and started in at the rear end of the cellar as being the most likely spot where

he could burrow his way out in the shortest space of time.

The labor of digging occupied his attention and kept his spirits up.

After working steadily for half an hour, and making quite a hole in the wall of earth, he stopped to rest.

He had planned, after getting free, to hurry back to town and notify Mr. Davenport where his daughter was held a prisoner; but it now occurred to him that his escape would be discovered long before he would probably be able to reach Brentwood and find the banker, and that the people in the house, fearing the inevitable result that must follow, would hasten to remove Cassie Davenport to some other place, and the effort to rescue the girl would be frustrated.

"If anything is going to be done to save her I'll have to do it myself while I'm on the spot," he said to himself. "The question is how shall I manage it?"

It was rather a difficult problem on the face of it.

But Jack was not a boy to give up the solution of a problem because it happened to be hard to get around.

He felt that it was plainly his duty to try and rescue Cassie Davenport if the thing were possible.

Having decided that point to his satisfaction, he began to consider its accomplishment.

"If I dig my way out before morning can I get into the house again from the outside?" he asked himself. "I'm afraid not, for there is little doubt but they keep the doors and windows locked most of the time. I wonder where this house is situated, anyway? It seemed to be among the hills as well as I could see last night while they were taking me into the house."

Jack resumed his digging before he thought of any definite plan that promised results.

He enlarged the hole to a considerable extent during the next hour, taking the precaution to deposit the loose earth in a box as he removed it, and afterward drag the box to the opposite end of the cellar and scatter the dirt about.

He had dug a hole four feet into the rear wall of the cellar when, from certain sounds he heard above, he thought he was going to have a visit from the two rascals.

He hastily stood one of the boxes against the excavation and going to the box which had served him for a breakfast-table he sat upon it in a dejected attitude.

He was not mistaken.

The trap was lifted and the lamp was thrust down for the person who held it to see that the steps were clear, and the prisoner not waiting to make a rush for freedom.

It was Curley who held the lamp, and he caught a view of Jack on the box.

"All right," he said to Meiggs, over his shoulder. "Come on."

Meiggs followed him down with the tray in his hands.

"Get up," he said to Jack, "and let me put this on the box."

The boy got up, with apparent meekness.

"Here's a plate of stew, with some bread and coffee," said



Meiggs. "You're livin' high for a prisoner," he grinned, "for you're gettin' the same fodder we eat ourselves. Be thankful we're treatin' you so well. If you behave yourself everythin' will go on all right, and when the time comes we'll let you go. If you try to escape we'll put you on bread and water as a punishment, see?"

Jack heard him, but made no reply.

"Get busy, young fellow," put in Curley. "Don't you see we're waitin'?"

So Jack turned to and cleaned up the dinner they had brought him, and as soon as he had finished they left him alone once more.

Half an hour later Jack resumed work on the hole, and kept at it steadily until he had enlarged it to a depth of six feet.

After taking a rest he began to loosen the earth from above the end of the excavation, as he considered he ought to be well beyond the line of the house.

When he had dug about a yard upward he stopped.

"I guess it won't be safe to do any more until night. The earth might cave in before I want it to."

So he sat down on the box that answered for a table and awaited the coming of his jailers with his supper.

## CHAPTER IV. CASSIE DAVENPORT.

It was two hours before Meiggs and Curley came down the cellar steps, the former bearing the tray and the latter the lamp, as before, and Jack, now that he had nothing to do, felt the time hang upon his hands.

But they came at last, and the boy was glad to see them, for he didn't believe they would disturb him again that night.

Meiggs placed the supper before him and the two rascals watched him eat it up.

Then a disagreeable surprise was sprung upon him.

Curley brought down a couple of sacks.

"Here's your bed," he said. "Now we'll have to tie your hands and feet for the night, so that we can be sure of you."

Jack put up a kick against it, but it didn't do him any good.

The men bound his arms behind him and then tied his ankles together.

Satisfied that he was safe for the night, they left him once more in the gloom of the cellar.

"This is a rough deal," grumbled Jack, rather disheartened at the unexpected turn of affairs. "I expected to be out of this den in a couple of hours or so. Now it looks as if I'm stuck for all night again, and that will put a stop to any scheme I might get up for helping Miss Davenport out of her trouble. I can't do a thing in daylight, for I dare say they keep a constant watch for intruders. Mother and sister are certainly wild by this time over my unexplained absence, and it is probable that the whole town knows that Miss Cassie has been kidnapped."

Jack fumed and fretted over his helpless condition for an hour.

"If I only could get free," he said to himself.

He tried hard to work his hands loose, but Curley had made too good a job of it.

Suddenly it occurred to him that by rubbing the cord continuously against one of the edges of the post he might in time succeed in fraying it so much that he would be able to snap it apart.

It seemed a first-class idea, and he adopted it at once.

He sat up, put his back against the post and began to work his arms up and down with a sawing motion, holding the cord that secured his wrists against the sharp edge of the post.

Long before any impression seemed to have been made on the cord his arms grew tired from the awkward exercise.

But, with intervals of rest, he kept doggedly at it, for he felt confident he would succeed in the end.

While he worked away he could hear the movements of the people in the kitchen over his head.

At last even those sounds ceased and complete stillness reigned in the house.

It was about this time that in exerting his strength on the cords for about the twentieth time one of them snapped.

This loosened the other and out came Jack's hands, free at last.

It was scarcely more than the work of a moment for him to put his hand in his pocket, draw out his jack-knife and sever the cords around his ankles.

Then he stood up, untrammelled.

The first thing he did was to run up the steps and listen attentively at the trap.

Not a sound in the kitchen.

Mechanically he pushed on the trap-door, expecting, of course, to find some heavy weight holding it down.

To his great surprise it yielded readily enough to his touch and gradually opened up until he thrust his head and shoulders into the dark kitchen.

"By the great archipelago, this is luck for fair!" he breathed, in a quiver of excitement.

A moment later he stood up in the room and looked about him.

His eyes being accustomed to the darkness of the cellar, every object in the kitchen was easily apparent to him.

He saw a door ahead of him.

Going to it he cautiously opened it a trifle, and finding darkness beyond he struck a match on his trousers to deaden the sound, and saw that he was looking into a small entry with a flight of stairs leading to the story above.

He decided to ascend the steps, and removed his shoes for that purpose.

Then it occurred to him that it would be the act of a wise general to provide an avenue of safe retreat in case of surprise or mishap.

So he looked around for the door opening upon the outer air.

That was not difficult to find.



It was locked and doubly bolted, but it was an easy matter to turn the key and draw the heavy bolts.

Then leaving the door slightly ajar, with his shoes beside it, he started up the stairs as softly as he could, so as to avoid making any suspicious sounds.

He believed and hoped the two men and the woman were abed and asleep, but he was by no means sure of the fact.

People of their stamp, he argued, were not in the habit of going to bed early.

Still he thought if they were up they should be downstairs.

"I was a fool not to look in the front room before I came up here," he thought, as he struck the landing above.

Then he noticed a light shining under the crevice of a door, and presently heard the voices of a man and woman.

He tiptoed over to the door, and, holding his breath, listened attentively.

He recognized the voice of Meiggs.

The female, therefore, must be Mrs. Meiggs.

"William," the woman was saying, "I hope we'll get rid of that girl soon. She is a spunky thing and has given me a lot of trouble since she came to her senses."

"We can't get rid of her till Jim (meaning Mulbrook) comes to terms with her old man. Then we'll be well paid."

"We ought to be, for the risk is considerable. I was rather ag'in goin' into it, for I ain't hankerin' after a spell at the Danemora penitentiary, but seein' you talked me into it I'll see it through, sink or swim."

"That's the way to talk, old woman," replied her husband, approvingly. "We've got to have the long green, and there ain't no easier way of earnin' it than this that I know of."

"Well, I want half of what you get, remember," she said, in a decided tone. "If you hold any back, and I find it out, you'll have cause to regret it."

"I'll deal square with you, don't you fret. Now s'pose we have a hot whisky before we turn in?"

"I'm not goin' downstairs to light no fire to heat water at this time of the night. We'll take the whisky cold to-night."

Jack heard Meiggs growl about his wife's laziness, but she shut him up in a tart way, and soon the boy heard the rattle of glasses and presently Meiggs said:

"Here's lookin' at you, old woman."

"My regards, William," she answered.

Then followed the clinking of glasses and a short silence.

"If they knew I was out here on the landing they'd have a fit," breathed Jack, as he listened to their further conversation.

In ten minutes they had another drink and then the listener judged they were going to bed.

"Are you sure that boy is all right in the cellar?" asked Mrs. Meiggs, suddenly.

"What the deuce made her think of me?" thought Jack, uneasily.

He was reassured when Meiggs replied:

"All right? Why, of course he's all right. Me and

Curley tied him hand and foot. He might as well think of flyin' as to get out of that place to-night."

"Did you put that rock on the trap?" inquired his wife.

"No. What's the use? Didn't I say the boy is tied hard and fast?"

"But he might get loose," persisted Mrs. Meiggs.

"There ain't no chance of his gettin' loose."

"How do you know there isn't?" replied the woman, tartly. "You go right downstairs and put that rock on that trap."

"But I've got my clothes off," objected her husband.

"Put 'em on ag'in, or go down without."

"I tell you, old woman——"

"Shut up and do as I tell you. I ain't takin' no chances in this thing even if you are, William Meiggs."

Jack saw that Meiggs would have to go downstairs and do the job, and therefore it behooved him to get down first.

As the quickest way of accomplishing this without noise he slid down the rail, rebolted the kitchen door for fear Meiggs might examine it, and then taking his shoes in his hand he hid under the stairs.

Pretty soon down came Meiggs, with a lamp in his hand, in his shirt and pants.

He went in by the way out, and rolled the rock on top of the trap. In from the

"I hope the old woman'll be satisfied now," Jack, from his place of concealment, heard him say.

Then he remounted the stairs again, a door banged and all was quiet once more.

Jack decided to wait for half an hour at least before remounting the stairs.

He hoped by that time Meiggs and his wife would be asleep.

Returning to the kitchen he again withdrew the bolts that secured the door.

The clock struck midnight while he was doing this, and then he sat down and waited patiently until the minute-hand had got around to the half-hour mark.

"Now for business," he said, rising to his feet. "I've got to find out the room in which Miss Cassie is confined, and set her free. And I must do it without alarming the occupants of the house or there's likely to be something doing."

Jack returned to the entry and made his way up to the landing once more.

He struck a match and looked around.

"That's the door of the Meiggs's room, and this door is—ah, there's a key on the outside, and a bolt also shot into its socket. I'll bet this is where Miss Cassie is held a prisoner. The third door I guess opens into Curley's room. I've a delicate job before me. If Miss Cassie takes me for one of her enemies and makes an outcry, the fat will all be in the fire. Well, I've got to risk it."

He softly turned the key in the lock and then tackled the bolt.

It did not move easily, as the tongue was wide and flat,



and, moreover, somewhat rusted from long disuse before it had been affixed to the door.

Finally he succeeded in shooting it without making much noise.

Then he opened the door slowly and cautiously peered into the room.

It was almost as dark as the cellar, for the windows had been boarded up so as to effectually prevent egress through them.

Jack closed the door behind him and advanced with great care into the room, for fear he might upset some article of furniture.

Coming to the center of the room he paused and listened. At first he could hear nothing, then the soft breathing of a sleeper fell upon his ears.

He struck a match and glanced around as it flared up.

The room was furnished with a coarse rag carpet, a common kitchen chair, a small deal table, a plain wash-stand with pitcher and bowl, and lastly a wooden bed of ancient build.

On the bed lay Cassie Davenport, fully dressed, just as she had been spirited away from her home the night before.

Jack lit a second match and looked at her.

She was a very pretty girl, with golden blonde hair, peach-bloom complexion, and dainty form.

There were traces of tears on her cheeks, <sup>st</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>he</sup> she had cried herself to sleep.

Jack felt sorry for her and determined to rescue her from the house at any hazard.

Dropping the expiring match on the carpet he walked to the bed, and placing one hand just above the girl's mouth to stifle any cry she might make, he shook her into sudden wakefulness.

"Hush, Miss Cassie!" he whispered. "I've come to save you."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE ESCAPE.

The girl was clearly startled by the presence of an unknown person beside her in the darkness.

Instinctively she took the boy for one of her enemies, and an exclamation of alarm rose to her lips, while she struggled to free her mouth from his hand.

"Don't be frightened, Miss Cassie," said Jack, reassuringly. "I am here to take you back to your home. If you make a noise you'll alarm the house and spoil everything."

His words seemed to make an impression on the girl, for she ceased to struggle.

Finding that she was beginning to understand the situation, Jack stepped back and lit another match.

As the light flared up Cassie gazed eagerly into his face.

She had never seen him before, but somehow she felt that she could trust him.

"Are you from Brentwood?" she asked, earnestly.

"Yes. I live in Brentwood, and my name is Jack Street."

"How is it that you are here? How did you know I was in this house?"

"I will explain that when we are away from this place. At present we ought not to lose a moment in leaving this building. My presence here might be discovered at any moment. Come, let us go."

Cassie rose from the bed and put her hand in his.

"I believe you are my friend," she said. "I am sure I can trust you. These people have carried me away from home in order to make my father pay a large sum of money. The woman that watches me and brings me food is a bad woman, and I hate her. I do want to go home at once. I know my mother and father are worried to death about me."

On reaching the door, Jack looked out, but all was still.

"Go softly and carefully," he said. "That'll save you taking off your shoes."

She allowed him to lead her, and he took her to the foot of the flight.

Then he led her into the kitchen and closed the door behind them.

"The worst is over now," he said, as he picked up his shoes and put them on. "All that stands between us and freedom is this door, which is unlocked and unbolted. We have only to step outside."

As Jack spoke the entry door behind them opened slowly and cautiously and a head was thrust in.

It was Curley, who was a light sleeper, and had been awakened by the creaking of the stairs as they bent under the weight of Jack and his fair companion.

The softness of the creaking was what aroused Curley's suspicions.

Had the noise been comparatively loud he would have thought it was made by either Meiggs or his wife descending for some purpose to the kitchen.

He had not the least idea that Jack was out of the cellar, but he thought perhaps Mrs. Meiggs had forgotten to lock and bolt the door of the girl's room; that the prisoner had discovered the fact and was trying to take advantage of it.

Of course this was only a suspicion.

He hardly believed there was anything in it, but still he determined to make sure everything was all right.

So he leaped out of bed, lit a candle and went out on the landing to take a look at the fastenings on the prisoner's door.

He discovered the door ajar.

With a muttered curse at the carelessness of Mrs. Meiggs, he darted back into his room and drew on his trousers and coat.

Then he crept down the stairs and opened the kitchen door, expecting only to find the girl in the darkness trying to undo the fastenings of the outside door.

He was staggered to find that she had a companion, whom, in the gloom, he did not immediately recognize as the boy he and Meiggs had left bound hand and foot in the cellar.

But as Jack opened the door and the clear night air par-



tially revealed his features, Curley recognized him and gave a gasp of surprise.

He sprang forward with a roar of anger and seized Cassie just as she was passing through the door.

She uttered a stifled scream of terror as she felt the heavy, detaining hand on her shoulder.

Jack turned to see what was the matter, and he came face to face with Curley.

"Thought you'd get away, did you?" snarled the man, maliciously, reaching out his disengaged hand to grasp the boy. "Thought we was asleep and wouldn't know nothin' about it, eh? I'll fix you for this, you slippery young monkey."

But Jack wasn't caught as easily as he thought.

The boy was staggered for a moment by the rascal's unexpected appearance at the very time when he was congratulating himself that the coast was clear.

Recovering himself instantly, and rendered desperate by the imminent danger of recapture and its attendant consequences, he suddenly struck at Curley's face with all his might.

The blow took effect right between the man's eyes and he fell back, releasing his grip on Cassie.

"Run, Miss Cassie, run!" cried Jack, jabbing Curley in the stomach and then slamming the door in his face.

He followed the girl, who was fleeing across the grass-covered valley as fast as she could go, and soon overtook her.

Curley ran to the entry, pounded lustily on the wall, and shouted for Meiggs to get up.

As soon as that worthy came, sleepily, to the door and inquired the cause of the rumpus, Curley shouted that their prisoners had escaped from the house and were running down the valley.

Although the intelligence seemed incredible to Meiggs, it was sufficiently grave to wake him up to the urgency of the moment.

He ran into his room to partly dress himself, while Curley started after the fugitives.

Knowing that they would be pursued at once, and that Cassie would not be able to maintain a pace swift enough to throw off their pursuers, Jack looked around for some spot where they could hide until the men had passed them.

The height and thickness of the grass favored them in this respect, while it handicapped their progress.

The clearness of the night was against them, but by lying low in the grass the boy hoped they might avoid discovery.

"Drop down, Miss Cassie, on your hands and knees. We must work a bit of strategy on those chaps. It's our only chance to elude them."

He pulled her down after him, and not a moment too soon to avoid the sharp eyes of Curley as he dashed from the house in pursuit.

They lay silent and motionless close to the ground while he passed at full speed within a couple of yards of them.

"Now we'll crawl over to the rocks and see if we can get out of the valley that way," said Jack, as soon as Curley got some distance in advance.

Before they had accomplished half the distance, for that kind of locomotion was slow, Meiggs came running out of the house, while Mrs. Meiggs's head might have been seen thrust from an upper window following with her eyes the efforts of Curley and her husband to recapture their prisoners.

Curley did not stop till he reached the ascending path that led out of the valley.

He was surprised to think the fugitives could have got as far as that without his having seen or overhauled them.

It was possible for him to see quite a distance up the road, and any object upon it must have been thrown out into relief against the clear sky.

He confidently expected to see the fugitives close at hand, and was ready to make a dash for them, but he was puzzled and disappointed when the way ahead showed up perfectly clear.

Then it was apparent to him that the runaways had in some way eluded him in the valley by hiding behind a rock or in the tall grass.

He vented his rage and started back the way he had come, keeping his eyes warily on the lookout for some sign of them.

He soon saw Meiggs hastening toward him.

"Why are you coming back?" asked Meiggs. "They couldn't have got away already, could they?"

"No. They've given me the slip in the grass. They are still in the valley somewhere."

"Then, by Judas, we'll root 'em out!" cried Meiggs. "Do you mean to say that both the boy and the girl have got out of the house?"

"That's just what they have. I can see now how it happened. We were too sure that boy was safe, bound hand and foot, that we didn't put the rock on the cellar trap-door, and so——"

"But I went downstairs before I got in bed and put it on."

"You did?" exclaimed Curley.

"The old woman made me do it as soon as I told her we hadn't done it. She wouldn't give me any peace till I did."

"Did you look around the kitchen at the time?"

"No. Why should I?"

"If you had you might have discovered the kid hiding under the table, or in the entry under the stairs."

"I didn't see or hear anythin' suspicious."

"That's because you were half dopy. That boy must have been hidin' somewhere downstairs at that moment, for it stands to reason if he didn't get out before you put the stone on the trap he couldn't have done it afterward. I'll allow I couldn't lift that trap from below myself with that stone on it, and I reckon I'm a sight stronger than he is."

Meiggs saw the point of his companion's observations and was silent through sheer chagrin.

"I don't see how he could have got himself loose," growled Meiggs at last. "I tied him so tight that he couldn't pull his hands apart, no matter how he tried."

"You only think you did," snorted Curley. "The fact



that he was able to get out of the cellar shows that you made a beef of it. There's no doubt in my mind about that boy being in the kitchen or entry when you came down to put that rock on the trap. When you went back to your room and turned in, he went upstairs and let the girl out. I heard them sneakin' down the stairs. I didn't exactly suspect the truth, but I fancied somethin' was wrong, so I got up and investigated. I found them just goin' out at the kitchen door. I had the girl grabbed when that cub hit me a blow in the face, and another in the stomach, which doubled me up. Then they got away. I roared out for you and started after them. That's the whole of it. We've got to find them, though, if we stay up all night doin' it. Mulbrook wouldn't do a thing to us if they got clear off. It would bust the scheme higher than a kite."

While this conversation had been going on the two men were slowly retracing their steps, with their eyes cast to the right and left in search of some sign to indicate where the fugitives were.

At that moment they heard Mrs. Meiggs scream out:

"There they go. There's the two of 'em goin' up the rocks."

She waved her hands across the narrow valley to the left, and sure enough the men saw Jack and Cassie climbing over the stones and bushes along the side of the steep hill.

Meiggs and Curley started at once to overtake them.

## CHAPTER VI.

### BACK IN BRENTWOOD.

"Those chaps are some distance away now, Miss Cassie," said Jack, when they reached the foot of the rocky hillside. "Now is our chance to creep up this narrow path. If the night wasn't so confounded bright our chances of escape would be first-class. Gee whiz! There's that woman looking out of one of the windows," he added. "I'm afraid she'll pipe us off before we can get very far."

They started up the incline as fast as they could go, and had got half way to a certain point Jack was aiming at when Mrs. Meiggs detected them and, as we have seen, called the men's attention to them.

"That old woman has eyes as sharp as a needle," said Jack, helping Cassie forward. "I was afraid she'd see us. Now the men are after us full swing."

"Oh, dear! I hope they won't catch us," replied the girl, in a shiver of apprehension. "It would be just dreadful to be taken back to that house again."

"They shan't take us back if I can help it," said Jack, resolutely. "They'd make it specially hot for me if they got their hands on me, for I am doing them up by helping you to escape."

While hiding in the grass, he had given Cassie a brief statement of how he had been captured by the kidnappers at the door of her home and brought along with her in the automobile.

He explained how he had been held a prisoner in the cellar, and how he managed to make his escape and go to her rescue.

She had told him he was a brave boy, and that she and her parents would be grateful to him as long as they lived.

Jack kept his arm around Cassie's waist so as to assist her over the rough places that lay in their path, upward.

It was soon apparent to them that the men would overtake them before they could reach any place where they could hope for a chance to give their pursuers the slip, unless something was done to stop their advance.

Cassie was growing exhausted under the severe exertion to which she was unused, and Jack was in despair when his eyes lighted on a pile of loose stones.

He grabbed a handful and commenced to bombard their enemies.

His aim was so true, and the stones whizzed so unpleasantly near to the heads of the rascals, that they were disconcerted and came to a halt in order to dodge missiles with more success.

They realized that a crack from one of the stones was no silly thing, and consequently they objected to it.

"Now, Cassie, while I hold these chaps at a distance, make your way up to that break in the hill. I'll join you as soon as I see you have reached the spot, and then maybe we'll find some way of throwing the men off our track."

She started to obey his directions, while Jack continued to take aim at the rascals below and to pelt them at a rapid rate.

One of the stones struck Curley on the shoulder and lamed his arm, causing him to swear frightfully and threaten the boy with a severe retaliation.

Jack was not intimidated in the least by his threats.

He knew the men would have scant mercy on him, anyway, if they caught him, so he considered he might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb.

He felt no compunction about hitting them if he could.

He was in that desperate frame of mind that if he laid their skulls open with a rock it wouldn't have troubled him in the least.

As it was, they had to do some lively dodging to save themselves from a blow.

Had they been much closer to Jack, or had it been daylight, they must have been struck repeatedly.

As long as he kept up his shower of missiles they did not dare advance upon him.

They looked in vain in their own neighborhood for stones to fire back at him.

Only when one of Jack's dropped close to them did they have the chance to try and get back at him.

At length Cassie reached the spot to which she had been directed by Jack.

Then he grabbed an armful of stones and ran towards her.

The two rascals resumed their chase the moment the bombardment stopped.

As soon as Jack joined the girl at the break in the hillside he saw that a path ran down through the hills, and that there appeared to be dozens of spots where they could hide.



After pelting the pursuers to a stop once more, Jack and Cassie disappeared from their sight down the path.

"They've gone down the hill," growled Meiggs, when the two men reached the break themselves.

"Of course they have and we've got to follow them. Put your best foot forward and let us see if we can't catch them before they can give us the slip."

They started rapidly down the path, confident of overtaking the fugitives, both swearing to do all kinds of things to Jack when they got hold of him.

But catching Jack and Cassie now was not such an easy matter as before.

There were trees and rocks and brushwood on every hand, behind which they could hide in comparative safety.

Meiggs and Curley lost their best chance of recapturing the fugitives when Jack stood them off with his stone bombardment until Cassie had climbed the hill as far as they intended to go up.

Half way down the hill two pair of eager eyes watched Meiggs and Curley go by, and after they were out of sight, out from behind a thick mass of brushwood stepped Jack and Cassie.

They retraced their steps to the opening in the hill; they ran down the hillside in full view of the excited Mrs. Meiggs, who looked in vain for her husband and Curley at their heels; they ran across the grassy valley, and finally disappeared up the road by which the automobile had brought them both on the preceding night to the house in the valley.

After that they walked rapidly along until in the course of two hours they came out on the county road, which led straight to Brentwood, twenty miles away.

It was about four o'clock in the morning, and so far as the fugitives could see there was not a house in sight.

Both were weary after their night's exertions, especially Cassie.

"It doesn't seem as if I could go another step," she said, in a tired voice. "Do you think we are safe from those men now?"

"If we aren't we're next door to it," replied Jack, cheerfully. "Here's a log. We'll sit down and rest a while."

They sank wearily upon the hollow old log that lay half buried in the soil by the side of the road, and the girl, resting her head on Jack's shoulder, closed her eyes.

He supported her with his arm around her waist.

After a silence of several minutes the boy spoke.

"Where were your mother and father and the servants at the time those rascals carried you off? Surely they could not have been in the house, for no alarm was raised, although you screamed twice, loud enough for me to hear you on the sidewalk."

"Mother and father were away in Bridgewater at the wedding of an old friend," she answered. "We have three women servants, but singular to relate each of them received a letter that afternoon calling them to their homes on account of illness in their families."

"They did, eh?"

"Yes."

"A put-up job to get them away from the house. It's a wonder you were not afraid to remain alone."

"I did not expect to stay alone. Miss Styles, my Sunday-school teacher, had promised to come over after a church meeting and stay all night with me. I was reading in the sitting-room, waiting to hear her ring the bell, when those two men came suddenly upon me. At first I was speechless from fright, then as one advanced upon me I screamed for help. As he grabbed me I screamed a second time, but he stifled it by pressing a handkerchief over my mouth and nose. I smelled a sweet, sickening kind of odor, my senses whirled, and I remembered no more until I came to myself in that room where you found me. That hateful woman was bending over me, with such a horrid smile on her wicked features that I thought I had the nightmare. When I found I was really awake I was so frightened at first I did not know what to do. I asked her what was the meaning of it all, and she told me I had been carried away from my home because my father was believed to be rich and could well afford to pay a big sum of money to save me from coming to any harm. Then I demanded that I be taken back to Brentwood, but she only laughed, mockingly, and said I would not get back until my father had paid the money they wanted."

"Well," said Jack, "I guess they'll have to go without that money they calculated on getting from your father."

"They would have got it but for you, Jack Street. I shall never forget how bravely you have acted, and how good you have been to me—never, never!"

"Don't mention it, Miss Cassie."

"But I will mention it," she replied, earnestly. "You are going to be one of my friends after this, aren't you?"

"I should be glad to have that honor, Miss Cassie," he said, a bit wistfully; "but I'm only a poor boy, you see, and I couldn't expect—"

"What nonsense! Do you suppose that would make any difference with me after what you have done? Or with my parents? Not a bit of it. I shall be glad to call you a friend worth having. A boy who stood by me and saved me from a terrible position when there was no one else to do it."

"I will try to prove myself worthy of your friendship, Miss Cassie."

"You have proved it already, you foolish boy, have you not?"

At that moment, just as the eastern sky began to show faint indications of the coming dawn, their ears caught the sound of a team approaching up the road.

It proved to be a big wagon loaded with country produce for market.

"Here's a chance for us to get a lift on to town, perhaps," remarked Jack, jumping to his feet.

He walked out into the road and hailed the driver, who reined in his horses.

"Will you give us a ride toward town, sir?" he asked,



politely. "We're pretty well fagged out, and in no shape to walk there."

"Walk to Brentwood?" ejaculated the man, regarding first the speaker and then the hatless, well-dressed girl with some surprise. "Do you know how far it is to that town?"

"I have no idea of the exact distance," replied Jack; "but I guess it's a good way."

"It's every foot of eighteen mile, young man. Do you two live at Brentwood?"

"We do."

"How come you to be away out here at this hour of the morning?"

"We were brought here against our wills."

"Brought here against your wills!" exclaimed the driver of the team, in some wonder. "How is that?"

"I'll tell you our story if you will be so good as to help us on to town. I suppose you are going to Brentwood."

"You suppose right. I'm going there as straight as this road will carry me."

"That's straight enough for us," said Jack. "I may say that this young lady's father will pay you well for any inconvenience we may put you to. She is the daughter of Mr. Davenport, the president of the Brentwood National Bank."

The man gave utterance to a low whistle, for he knew that Willard Davenport was one of Brentwood's leading citizens.

"Jump up," he said; "there's room enough on this seat for both of you."

Jack assisted Cassie to mount to the driver's perch, and then squeezed alongside of her himself.

"Git up, there!" cried the driver, snapping his long whip, and the team went on.

As they jogged along toward town Jack told the driver how both he and Miss Davenport had been carried off into the hills in a red automobile by a couple of kidnappers who counted on squeezing Mr. Davenport out of a round sum of money.

And how he had managed to escape from the cellar where he was confined and rescue the girl, detailing the strenuous time they had passed through in their efforts, finally successful, to elude their pursuers.

"That sounds just like a story book," said the driver, when Jack had finished his story. "I suppose it will all be in the paper in a day or so. You're a regular hero, young man. I'm blessed if any man could have done better under the circumstances."

It was about eight o'clock when the wagon entered the town limits, and ten minutes afterward Jack and Cassie alighted before the elegant residence of Banker Davenport.

## CHAPTER VII.

### JACK RECEIVES TOKENS OF THE DAVENPORTS' GRATITUDE.

The disappearance of Cassie Davenport from her home had created the greatest alarm in the minds of her parents when they returned in the morning from the town of Bridgewater.

The three servants had got back after discovering that the letters summoning them to their homes were fake ones.

Messengers were despatched to the neighboring residences of those families on visiting terms with the Davenports to try and get some trace of Cassie, but of course without result.

Mr. Davenport spent the best part of the day looking for some clew to account for his daughter's unexplained absence, and finding none he called in the services of the police to assist him.

Mrs. Davenport was almost prostrated with anxiety, while the household generally was in a state of consternation.

A sleepless night was passed by the anxious parents and the second morning came without bringing any light upon the mystery.

Just as the clock struck eight, and the banker and his wife were making a pretence of eating their breakfast, the postman left several letters at the door.

One of these was in a handwriting strange to Mr. Davenport, and he opened it first.

It was a brief communication (unsigned) from Jim Mulbrook, the rascal who had engineered the kidnapping of Cassie.

He said that, in accordance with a well-arranged scheme, Mr. Davenport's daughter had been abducted and was now held for ransom.

The sum they had fixed upon was \$20,000.

That amount must be left in bills at a certain spot, at a certain hour, along the highway from Brentwood to Lancaster, to insure the girl's liberation.

Failure on the banker's part to comply with their terms, or if he hired detectives to find the girl and to run the kidnappers down, would certainly lead to unpleasant consequences for Cassie Davenport.

The banker was given three days in which to make up his mind, during which time the writer assured him that the girl would be well taken care of.

That was all.

"My heavens!" gasped Mr. Davenport, turning as pale as death.

"Oh, Willard!" gasped his wife, rising quickly, her face going quite white. "Is that news of our Cassie? Don't tell me our child is dead!" she added, clutching the table for support.

"She is not dead, Clara. She has been kidnapped," replied her husband, in a choked voice.

"Kidnapped! Oh, Father of Mercy! My poor child! My Cassie!"

Mrs. Davenport sank into another chair and burst into a flood of tears.

It was at this thrilling moment that Cassie, followed by Jack, at her earnest solicitation, entered the house.

We will not dwell upon the surprise and delight of Mr. and Mrs. Davenport when their daughter burst into the breakfast-room and sprang into her mother's arms.

Nor will we more than mention the heartfelt gratitude



the banker and his wife showered upon Jack Street when the story of the young people's adventures in and out of the hands of the kidnappers had been told.

Jack declined to remain to breakfast, though pressed to do so, as he was in a great hurry to go home and relieve the anxious suspense of his mother and sister.

Cassie accompanied him to the door.

"But you will call to-night, won't you?" she said, eagerly.

It was impossible to resist the pleading request of so lovely a girl as Cassie Davenport, and so Jack promised to call that evening.

As he expected, he found his mother and sister worried to death over his unexplained absence, and, of course, he had a long story to tell them in explanation of it.

As he was pretty well "bunged up," to use his own expression, he did not go to business that day, but turned in for a good sleep after he had had something to eat.

During the morning, the banker, after furnishing the police with information about the location of the house in the valley among the distant hills, together with the tolerably accurate description of the three accomplices of Jim Mulbrook, the chief kidnapper, furnished by Jack, gave the whole story to the Brentwood Daily Mercury, and it appeared under a big scare head in the afternoon editions.

Of course, Tom Harper saw the story, and he rushed around to his friend's house about supper-time.

Jack had just got up, feeling all right again.

"Hello, Jack!" cried Tom, bursting into his room. "Is this all true that I've just read about you in the evening paper?"

"If you'll tell me what you've seen about me in the paper maybe I'll be able to answer your question," laughed Jack.

Tom gave him the gist of the story.

"Well, I guess that's true enough," admitted his friend.

"Do you mean to say that you were actually carried off by those kidnappers at the time they abducted Mr. Davenport's daughter, and that you rescued that girl from them in such a thrilling manner?"

"Yes, that's all right," nodded Jack. "We both had quite a strenuous time of it."

"I should think you did. I never thought you had such a nerve as you seem to have shown. My gracious! You're a regular hero, aren't you? You rescued one of the prettiest girls in Brentwood, and one of the richest, too—at least she will be one of these days, for she is the only child of Banker Davenport."

"Oh, come now, Tom, cut it out!" grinned Jack.

"What for? You can't deny that you've done a big thing. You're the central figure of that article in the paper, and I'll bet everybody in town is talking about you and saying what a brave fellow you are, etc., etc."

"Tom Harper, you make me tired."

Tom laughed.

"You ought to make a good thing out of it, at any rate."

"Why ought I?"

"You saved Mr. Davenport \$20,000. He ought to turn around and hand you five thousand of it."

"I hope he won't think of doing any such thing."

"Why not? Five thousand is an awful lot of money, and I'll bet he'd never miss it. You can bet your life I wouldn't turn it down if it was offered to me."

"I don't believe in taking pay for assisting a person, especially a helpless girl, out of trouble. I don't consider that I did more than my duty."

"That's all right in an ordinary case. But this girl's father is rich—at least everybody believes he is, for he's president of the biggest bank in town and lives like a nabob. I don't see any reason why you shouldn't accept money from such a man if he offered it to you."

"Well, I don't care how rich he is, I wouldn't take a cent for what I did for his daughter. There's some things I consider above price, and that's one of them."

Mrs. Street called her son to supper and Tom was invited to stay and have some.

"Well, seeing it's you, I'll stay," said Tom, "but I told mother I'd be right back."

"She'll never miss you, old man," chuckled Jack. "There are six more of you to occupy her attention."

"That's right. And they'll eat up my share you can bet."

After supper Tom took his departure and then Jack went to his room to spruce up for his promised visit on Miss Cassie.

He was a mighty good-looking boy when he was dressed in his best, with his curly hair well brushed up and his shoes polished up to the queen's taste.

He received a warm welcome at the Davenport home, and was pleased to find that the banker made no suggestion of paying him for the service he had rendered his child.

He spent a pleasant evening and left at ten o'clock, fully persuaded that Cassie was the nicest girl he had ever met.

A few days afterward a small package, addressed to him, was delivered at the farm.

On opening it he found an elegant gold watch and chain, suitably inscribed with his name; also a diamond studded horseshoe ornament.

A letter accompanied the gifts, stating that the watch and chain was the joint offering of Mr. and Mrs. Davenport, while the horseshoe was Cassie's present.

They hoped he would accept the tokens as a slight evidence of their regard and life-long gratitude.

Jack had no objection to accepting the presents; in fact, he was delighted with them, and from that hour he wore them wherever he went.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A GRANITE DISCOVERY.

The next time Jack called at the Davenport home the banker asked him into his library.

"I guess I can put you in the way of making a few dollars, Master Jack," he said, with a smile.

"I'm much obliged to you, sir. I'm trying to earn something over and above my wages these days, for I'm not receiving a princely sum for my services, though I have no



fault to find in that respect. I've only been in business a little over a year, and I can't expect to earn much until I get older and more experienced."

"You told me that you are canvassing for insurance, and that you've made quite a little sum during the last month in commissions."

"I've made about \$165 all told, sir."

"That isn't bad. You seem to be something of a hustler, I should judge."

"When a fellow is out for himself he feels like hustling. At any rate, he has got to keep awake and lively on his pins if he expects to do anything."

"I'm going to take out another \$5,000 ordinary life policy in the Phalanx Co. Bring me the application paper and I'll fill it out and sign it. You ought to make a good commission on it."

"I'll get \$175, sir."

"That's fair enough. Now I'll give you a letter of introduction to a friend of mine, Mr. Harker, vice-president of the Brentwood Trust Company. He told me that he intended taking out a \$10,000 endowment policy in the Phalanx. I asked him as a personal favor to put his application in through you, and he said he would do so. Call on him to-morrow evening at his home, with the necessary papers, and he'll fill them out. That will add \$350 more to your outside income."

"I will certainly call on him, Mr. Davenport. I am very much obliged to you for putting me in the way of getting him."

"Don't mention it, my boy. I am more than pleased to give you a lift. Remember what an obligation I am under to you. Here is the letter I spoke about. Put it in your pocket. And now I guess Cassie is waiting for you in the sitting-room upstairs. She will give me a scolding if I keep you too long away from her."

On the following evening Jack called with his letter of introduction on Mr. Harker.

That gentleman received him cordially, and after an hour's interview the boy left with Mr. Harker's \$10,000 application, duly signed, in his pocket.

His employer congratulated him when he turned it into the office next day.

"Oh, I've got another for \$5,000 coming to-morrow," said Jack.

"Indeed! Whose is it?"

"Mr. Davenport's."

"You'll soon have a fat bank account if you keep on. I guess I'll have to raise you to \$4. You are easily worth it."

"Thank you, sir. You'll find I'll try to earn it."

Through Mr. Davenport's influence, Jack secured quite a bit of insurance business, so that three months from the date of his adventure with the kidnappers he had about \$650 to his credit in a savings bank.

The kidnappers in question had not been captured by the police, as they took time by the forelock when their scheme against Banker Davenport failed through Jack's exertions, and disappeared from the neighborhood.

Jim Mulbrook, however, had it in for the boy, and he and his associates in crime hoped to get even with Jack in the course of time.

One Sunday morning Jack and Tom were strolling about the Trent farm, which still remained unsold or unrented, much to Mr. Shuttleworth's dissatisfaction, when they sat down on the bank of the creek branch, which ran along one edge of the property.

"How about the railroad, Tom?" asked Jack. "Isn't it almost time they started to build it?"

"It will be commenced soon. I heard yesterday that John Owens, of Bridgewater, has secured the contract for building it. He's the man that put in a bid for the new road through the hills to Taylorsville."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. He's had an engineer tapping the hills for building stone; but my boss says he'll never get the kind he wants anywhere within a hundred miles of here."

"He won't?"

"No. He'll have to bring the stone from the Leamington quarries in Jasper county, and that's three hundred miles to the north."

"And it'll cost him something to get it down this way."

"You can bet it will; but he has, of course, covered himself in his contract. Nobody else can do any better."

Suddenly Jack noticed that the waters of the creek had washed the soil away from a portion of the bank near where they sat, uncovering a short stretch of hard rock, which glistened in a peculiar way in the morning sunshine.

"There's a patch of stone now right on this farm," said Jack, pointing it out to his companion. "I wonder how much there is of it, and what kind of stone it is? Just see how it glistens."

They got up and went to take a look at it.

"Why, that looks like granite," said Tom.

"Granite!" ejaculated Jack. "That's a valuable kind of building stone."

"Sure it is."

"Did you ever hear of any having been found in this locality?"

"No. I would have known of it if such was the case, for my boss has surveyed a good part of the county."

"Then I guess that isn't granite."

"If it isn't, it's a near relation, then," replied Tom.

"Well, it looks like good stone. I should like to get an engineer's opinion on it. If he pronounced it building stone I guess it would pay me to buy this farm as a speculative venture."

"You can bet it would. Why don't you look into it at once?"

"I will. I'll call on Mr. Davenport and have a talk with him on the subject."

"That's right. If there's enough of it, and it's suitable for building the culverts along the railroad line, and the low viaduct across the salt meadow, you could make a deal with the contractor."

"Well, don't say anything about this matter, Tom. I



don't want this to reach the ears of Mr. Shuttleworth, or he'll be over here poking around to see what he can make out of it himself."

"I'll not say a word. If there's anything to be made out of that stone I want to see you make it. Shuttleworth is too mean a man to suit me. He practically robbed the Trents out of a couple of hundred dollars by foreclosing on them and buying the place in at his own price almost."

Jack had a talk with Mr. Davenport that evening, and that gentleman recommended him to consult a certain Bridgewater engineer.

In fact, he promised to write to the engineer himself and ask him to come to Brentwood and pass his opinion on the stone in question.

A few days afterward the engineer came.

Jack met him by appointment, took him out to the farm, and they went over it together.

The engineer examined the uncovered rock and pronounced it an excellent quality of granite.

He probed the ground and ascertained that the ledge ran right through the center of the farm, and presumably out under the county road.

"Would you advise me to buy this property on the strength of your estimate?" asked Jack, eagerly.

"By all means. You'll have a fortune in this ground, you can take my word for it."

Jack was greatly excited.

When his mother came home from where she had been working all that day he told her of the engineer's verdict.

"I've got over \$600 in bank, mother. I want you to take it and buy this farm for me in your own name. I can't do it, for I'm under age."

Mrs. Street, impressed by her son's statement of the future that lay in the granite ledge under the farm, agreed to do it.

"We must do it at once before Mr. Shuttleworth hears of this discovery. I'll call on him to-night and make him an offer."

Jack did so.

Mr. Shuttleworth was greatly surprised when the boy disclosed the object of his visit.

"I thought your mother was poor," he said, beginning to repent of his generosity in permitting the Street family to occupy the Trent farm rent free for the last four months. "If she can afford to buy property she can afford to pay rent for the farm."

"She has no money," replied Jack. "I have got a few hundred dollars I made lately in commissions. I want to invest it in that farm if you'll sell it at a reasonable figure."

"My price is \$1,100," replied Mr. Shuttleworth.

"I'm aware you've been asking that for it, but it is more than it is worth."

"How do you know that?" grunted Mr. Shuttleworth.

"My employer is a real estate man and knows the real value of every foot of ground about this neighborhood. He told me that \$900 was a fair price for the Trent property."

"I don't care what he said. I'll take \$1,000, and not a cent less."

"You've had it in the market for nearly a year without getting a purchaser."

"That's my business. If you want that property you must pay me \$1,000."

"How much cash do you require?" asked Jack, anxiously.

"I'll take half cash. The balance on a three-year mortgage."

"Very well," replied Jack. "We'll buy it. Here is \$100 on account. Make out the receipt in my mother's name."

Mr. Shuttleworth looked as if he was sorry he had taken off the \$100 on the original price.

However, he gave his receipt for the money, and Mrs. Street signed the contract in duplicate two days later at his office.

The deed was turned over to a lawyer to examine the title, and while this was in progress Jack got a day off and visited the contractor who was going to build the railroad, and told him he had granite on his property for sale, and would like him to have it examined with the view of making a deal with him for stone for the railroad.

The contractor could hardly believe his ears, but he agreed to send an engineer to look into it.

Jack referred him to the engineer in Bridgewater who had gone over the land.

"Go and see him," said the boy. "His report ought to satisfy you. He's the best engineer in the State."

The contractor did go and see him, with the result that he made an offer to Jack in a day or two, which the boy submitted to Mr. Davenport.

The banker looked into the matter and told Jack the offer was too low.

He told him what figure to submit himself, and Jack did so.

By the time the final arrangements were completed the property passed into Mrs. Street's hands.

Then the news of the discovery of a fine ledge of granite on the Trent farm was printed in the Brentwood paper.

Mr. Shuttleworth read the account and was staggered.

He couldn't believe it; but investigation proved to him that he had let a fortune slip through his fingers, and perhaps he wasn't the maddest man in Brentwood!

## CHAPTER IX:

### PLOTTING AGAINST JACK STREET.

Jack Street saw substantial success before himself at last.

He had made a contract with John Owens, the railroad contractor, to furnish him with building stone for the bridge work and culverts all along the line of the M. & N. new branch from Bridgewater to Brentwood at a certain figure, and also to supply him with as much loose, broken rock as he could at one dollar a load.

Under these circumstances, and as he was truly out for himself in every sense the words implied, he resigned his situation at the real estate and insurance office, much to the



regret of his employer, who feared that never again would he get such a smart and capable lad in his office.

Mr. Davenport helped him with his advice and personal influence, and Jack found him a mountain of strength to rely upon in starting out in his new line of business.

It wasn't long before the back of the farm, down by the branch of the creek, began to wear an air of activity never before known in that neighborhood.

A gang of quarrymen, under the direction of an experienced foreman, were at work getting out the stone for the finishers to tackle and put into shape.

The loose rock, which accumulated from the blasting operations, was heaped up at one side, in ever-increasing mounds, to await the expected orders for its shipment as soon as Contractor Owens got ready to use it in his work upon the line which was already underway from Brentwood as a starting point.

As Cassie Davenport had expressed a wish to see the budding quarry in operation, Jack called for her one afternoon in his modest buggy, and took her out to the scene of his new business enterprise.

Before going to the quarry, Jack introduced her to his mother and sister, who had been quite anxious to meet his new friend.

Cassie took an immediate liking for Jessie Street, and invited her to call upon her at her home and take lunch some day, which Jack's sister promised to do.

Miss Davenport found much to interest and amuse her at the new granite quarry, and she remained some time talking to Jack, and asking questions which he could not always answer satisfactorily, owing to his inexperience in the business which he was trying to conduct in a way to do himself credit.

"Father says you're about as smart a boy as he ever met," she said, with a smile. "And that he finds great satisfaction in being able to help you along in your ambitious career."

"I am very much obliged to your father for his good opinion, and also for all he has done for me since I had the pleasure of making his acquaintance."

"I think the obligation is all on our side," replied Cassie, sweetly. "I suppose you expect to make a lot of money out of this quarry in time."

"I hope to make a good thing out of it. This stone is quite valuable, especially at this end of the State where stone of this kind is much in demand."

"Father says you were uncommonly shrewd to get hold of the property before Mr. Shuttleworth heard about your discovery of the granite."

"Well, as I made the discovery myself, I think I am entitled to whatever good results from it. Mr. Shuttleworth seems to be very indignant because I did not let him in on this thing. If I had done so he would soon have made it impossible for me to have ever reaped a penny out of it. Mrs. Shuttleworth has also expressed her displeasure by ceasing to employ my mother as her dressmaker, and by persuading her friends to drop her, but I don't think that will

make any difference now to mother, as we are making enough out of the place to enable us to get on without mother doing any more outside work."

After taking Cassie home, Jack met Tom.

"Come out and have supper with us, old man," said Jack. "I want you to see how well we're getting on at the quarry."

"All right," replied his friend, jumping into the buggy. "I'd like to see how things are progressing."

"I've got a whole shed full of dressed stone ready to ship at a moment's notice," said Jack.

"How do you like being your own boss?"

"First-class. The only way a chap can make real money is to get out for himself. I've done well ever since I put that method into operation."

"I wish I could get out for myself, then," said Tom.

"Wishing won't do you any good. Think out some plan for making money on your own account and then plunge in and hustle."

"It's easy to say that, but not so easy to do it."

"Well, I did it before this stone quarry turned up, and what I did you ought to be able to duplicate."

After supper Jack took Tom out to see what had been done at the quarry.

"This looks like business all right," remarked Tom, as he looked the place over in the gathering dusk. "No one would have thought the small patch of stone we saw uncovered by the action of the water that Sunday morning would have developed into a real quarry. It looked more like a solitary boulder than anything else."

"You're right—it did. If it wasn't for the fact that the building of this branch railroad put the idea of stone into my head I should never have thought of investigating the underpinning of this farm."

The boys went into the open shed where the stone, in all stages of preparation and in its finished state, lay about, and sat down on a bench in the darkness and talked about the future of the quarry which promised such splendid results.

During a pause in the conversation Tom saw a figure come out of the gloom and stand near the far corner of the shed.

"Who can that be?" he said to Jack, pointing the object out.

"Give it up," replied his friend. "Might be one of the men come back for something he forgot to take away."

Presently two other figures joined the first and the three advanced cautiously into the shed.

Their movements seemed to take on such a suspicious aspect that the boys remained silent observers of their actions.

"They are coming over this way," whispered Tom. "You don't recognize them, do you?"

"No," replied Jack, wondering who the intruders were.

The three men finally stopped within a yard of where the boys sat, concealed from their observation by a pile of dressed stone.



"You are sure the young cub lives in yonder house?" spoke a voice that had a familiar ring in it to Jack.

"Certain of it. I've been watching the place all day," replied one of his companions.

"How shall we entice him outside?" asked the third.

"Leave that to me, Meiggs," said the first speaker.

At the mention of the man's name Jack realized at once that these were the three men who had been concerned in the abduction of Cassie Davenport.

It was clear, from their words and their presence on the farm, that they were on some errand of mischief towards the boy who had spoiled their kidnapping scheme.

Jack squeezed Tom's arm, and that signal gave Harper to understand that his friend seemed to recognize the men.

"When we get him back to the house we'll put him through a course of sprouts that will teach him not to meddle again with matters that do not concern him," said the second speaker, evidently Curley, savagely. "He disabled my shoulder for nearly a week with one of the rocks he threw at Meiggs and me, and I'm goin' to pay him back for it good and hard."

"One of them stones cut my head, too," put in Meiggs, "and I'm goin' to have my innin's, after Curley gets through with him."

"Pshaw!" grated Mulbrook, impatiently, "what are little things like that compared with the important fact that he did us out of a cold \$20,000? Only for him we'd have got that money. Instead of which we've had to keep on the move ever since to avoid falling into the hands of the police. That's what we've got to pickle him for, d'ye understand?"

"Who'd ever thought that little monkey would have queered us the way he did?" growled Meiggs. "You two put your foot in it by not leavin' him bound and gagged on the veranda of the Davenport house."

"I don't know about that," replied Mulbrook, harshly. "How could we tell how much or how little he'd seen? He must have noticed the shape and color of the auto we left drawn up beside the curb. He could not help, if he was sharp-eyed, making some note of our general appearance. Those of themselves would have proved dangerous clues in the hands of detectives. Oh, Curley and I knew what we were about, don't you fret. The trouble came about by you not being more strict in guarding the boy."

"We had him tied up hand and foot. I can't get it through my head how he managed to free himself," replied Meiggs.

"Whether you can get it through your head or not the fact remains that he did get free, and then knocked our game in the head by his nerve in going up to the room and setting the girl free. He's a smart rooster, and he needs to have his comb cut to teach him a lesson he won't soon forget," replied Mulbrook, savagely.

"Well, what's the use talkin' about it all night," answered Meiggs, sulkily. "You've got the auto down the road. All that remains for us to do is to get him outside the house, grab him and carry him off to the house. When we've got

him safe in the hills, where no one will interfere, we can serve him out to the queen's taste."

"Well, you're pretty well disguised, Curley, with that Prince Albert suit and mutton-chop side whiskers," said Mulbrook. "You'd better go over to the house and get him to come outside with some excuse or other. We'll follow you and hide in the shrubbery, and when you hear me whistle, grab him quick, then we'll rush out and complete the work in short order."

Curley had no objection to playing the part assigned to him, and so the three rascals walked off toward the Trent farmhouse to put their plan into practice.

## CHAPTER X.

### TRAPPING THE KIDNAPPERS.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Tom, when the rascals had passed out of sight and hearing. "Those are the three chaps who carried off Miss Davenport."

"Two of them carried her off, while the third, a chap by the name of Meiggs, and a woman, who called herself Mrs. Meiggs, were in the plot to hold her a prisoner in the house among the hills for ransom," replied Jack, rising to his feet.

"It's a good thing we happened to be out here and heard them. They've got it in for you and mean to get square with you if they can. It would be a great thing if we could capture them now. There is a reward of \$5,000 offered by Mr. Davenport for their arrest and conviction."

"The three of them are too much for you and me to tackle," replied Jack.

"Of course, unless by some strategy."

"We must go over to the house and see what they're doing," said Jack. "Curley is going to knock at the front door and ask for me. Mother won't suspect anything wrong, and will tell him I'm down at the quarry with you."

"Then they'll come down here again and look for us."

"Yes, I guess that's what they'll do."

"Too bad you haven't a telephone connection with town, then you could ring up the police station and let the department know the kidnappers are hanging about the farm, trying to do you up."

"I have no particular use for a telephone. It would cost something to string a wire out here. In this particular instance it would come in handy, of course."

They approached the house with great caution and saw Mulbrook and Meiggs hide around the front corner of the building, while Curley went and knocked at the door.

Mrs. Street answered the summons.

The boys were too far away to hear what passed between her and Curley, but they easily guessed its purport.

Curley finally turned away, and as the door closed, was joined by his associates, who held a consultation.

The three presently started back for the quarry.

"They're doing just what I supposed they would," said Tom. "Now I've got an idea."

"What is it?"

"If there was any way by which you could attract and



hold their attention for half an hour without actually putting yourself in their clutches, I'd run down the road and look for their auto. When I discovered it I'd start for the police station at a hot pace and fetch the officers out here. Then maybe we'd catch them."

"That isn't so bad, if it could be worked," replied Jack. "But there's another way. They spoke about carrying me out to that house in the hills. It would seem, then, that they've taken up their quarters there again. We could guide the officers out there and lie in wait for them to return and then bag them."

"That's all right. Suppose we do that?"

"I would like to know with some degree of certainty that they are going out to that house to-night, even if they don't catch me, which, of course, they won't if I can help myself. The police might kick if we took them on a wild-goose errand."

"We could put the case right up to the officers and let them decide whether the scheme is a good one. That would let us out if it proved a failure."

"Well, that's true, enough. I'd prefer, though, if we could manage to capture them ourselves. Then we'd get all the honor as well as the whole of the reward. You see, \$5,000 is worth considering."

"You can bet it is. If the police make the capture we won't get anything, probably. I wish I could think up some kind of trap to entice them into."

"It would have to be a good one, for I guess those chaps are about as foxy as crooks come."

"There's no use standing here doing nothing. Those fellows are at the quarry by this time, looking around for us. If we're going to do something we've got to do it quick," said Tom.

They walked slowly toward the quarry, keeping their eyes wide open for a sight of the rascals, and trying to think up some feasible plan that would result in their capture.

They kept on the side opposite the shed in the shadow of a line of shrubbery.

Finally they made out the kidnappers standing at the top of the quarry, talking together.

Suddenly, as they started to leave the spot, two of them disappeared downward, with loud cries.

"They've fallen into the quarry," whispered Jack, in great excitement. "They stood too near the edge and the ground gave way under them where the men made the last blast late this afternoon."

They saw the one who had escaped look down and then run around the rim of the excavation to a point near the shed, where the opening was.

"That's Mulbrook," said Jack. "Let's crawl up and see how the other two have come out of the accident."

As they drew near the edge of the quarry, near where the two rascals had gone down, they heard groanings rising from the depths of the pit.

Fortunately for the villains the quarry was not yet very deep, but it was full of jagged rock, and it was quite pos-

sible that they might have hurt themselves severely on the debris.

"I believe my leg is broken," they heard Meiggs groan.

"And my arm is twistd out of shape," howled Curley, dismally.

"Where are you?" asked Mulbrook, coming to their assistance.

"Here we are, and pretty badly bunged up, too."

"Help me out, will you, Mulford?" whined Meiggs. "If my leg isn't broken it's next door to it."

"This is most unfortunate," said Mulbrook, clearing the rock away from where his companions reclined, half imbedded in the earth and stone.

"I should say it was—for us," replied Curley. "Blast the luck!"

"Those chaps got it in the neck for fair," whispered Tom to Jack.

Mulbrook assisted Curley out first and then gave his attention to Meiggs, who appeared to be the worst off of the two.

He groaned and swore alternately as Mulbrook lifted him out of the debris.

"I can't walk," he said. "If my leg isn't broken it's badly sprained."

Mulbrook helped him over to the shed, where he sat down on a block of stone.

"We ought to be a match for those fellows now," said Tom.

"Not if they're armed, as they're likely to be," replied Jack.

"Got any rope around here?" asked Tom.

"Sure. What do you want with it?"

"I thought we might make a couple of slip nooses, crawl up toward Mulbrook and the chap who isn't so badly injured, throw them over their heads and make them prisoners before they knew what had happened to them."

"Your head is chock full of ideas, isn't it, Tom? Do you really think it would work?"

"I think it would if we were quick enough about it, and caught them by surprise."

"The rope happens to be in the shed, and is hardly suitable for your plan," replied Jack.

"That knocks my scheme on the head," said Tom, disappointedly.

"We could run up to the house and get a couple of pieces of clothes line," suggested Jack. "Also two pieces of iron pipe that we could use for clubs in case of necessity."

"All right. I'm with you."

Accordingly, they hurried to the house, got the clothes lines, made running nooses in the end of each, and then, armed with the iron pipes, returned to the vicinity of the shed.

As well as they could make out in the gloom, Mulbrook appeared to be examining Meiggs's injured leg, while Curley, with his sleeve rolled up, was rubbing his arm.

"Your leg isn't broken," they heard Mulbrook say. "It



is probably sprained. We'll have to give up our project for a day or two until you get on your pins once more."

"That boy is a hoodoo for us," growled Curley.

"We'll hoodoo him when we catch him," retorted Mulbrook, ominously.

"Got your noose in working order?" asked Tom.

"Yes," answered Jack.

"Now is our chance to creep up on them. They are off their guard."

The nervy boys crept forward until close behind the men.

"Now let them have it," whispered Tom, darting at Curley and throwing the noose over his head.

It dropped around the astonished rascal's arms, and then Tom pulled it tight and began to drag him away from the group.

Jack succeeded in treating Mulbrook in the same way, and pulled him off his feet.

The two kidnappers made a terrible racket on finding themselves quite helpless.

They struggled to release themselves, but the nooses held tight.

With a little dexterity the boys wound the line around their victims' arms half a dozen times and tied it.

They cut off the remainder and used it to secure the men's feet.

When they went back for Meiggs they found he had disappeared.

They hunted around and found him hiding under the bushes.

A groan or two he couldn't suppress betrayed the spot to them.

He roared when they laid hold of him, but he could do nothing to save himself.

They used a bit of heavy rope from the shed to tie him.

"You watch them while I go and hunt up that auto of theirs," said Jack.

"All right," replied Tom, picking up one of the pieces of iron pipe and mounting guard over the discomfited scoundrels.

Jack found the auto a little way up the road, and ran it up in front of the farm gate.

He then returned to Tom.

They consulted as to the best way of moving the kidnappers to the road, which was at the other end of the ten-acre farm.

It was decided not to carry one all the way and then return for another, lest the rascals left behind might manage to free themselves while they were away.

They worked it by moving the first a hundred feet, then a second the same distance and finally the third.

Repeating this method over and over again they got them to the road.

After that it was easy to lift them into the auto, placing two between the seats and the other in the space before the front seat.

The boys got in themselves, Jack acting as chauffeur, and away they started for the police station in town.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE ESCAPED CONVICTS.

A crowd gathered around the red auto when Jack brought it to a stop before the police station.

He then ran inside and told the officer in charge that he and a companion had captured the kidnappers of Miss Davenport, and had them bound in their own machine at the door.

Two policemen were sent to bring the rascals into the station.

After a brief examination at the desk they were locked up for the night.

Of course the story of the capture was in next morning's paper, and everybody in town were soon talking about the brilliant exploit engineered by Jack Street and his friend, Tom Harper.

Jack and Cassie were the witnesses at the examination in the afternoon, and on their testimony the rascals were held for trial.

Mr. Davenport considered that the boys had fairly earned the reward, and he handed each of them his check for \$2,500.

"I'm rich at last," almost shouted Tom, when he and Jack cashed the checks at the paying-teller's window of the bank.

"You're pretty well off for a boy," admitted Jack. "What are you going to do with your \$2,500?"

"I don't know what I'll do with it, except to put it in the savings bank."

"That's the best place for it. That's where some of mine goes for the present, after I pay Mr. Davenport the \$1,000 he loaned me to start work at the quarry."

"You'll soon be having a good income from your stone."

"Yes, as soon as I get enough of it on the move."

Three weeks later the kidnappers were tried, convicted and sent to the penitentiary for ten years each.

"That'll keep them out of mischief for a good while to come," Jack remarked to his mother and sister when he got home after the trial.

The next nine months were busy ones for the boy.

He had a big gang of men at work at the quarry, for he secured many contracts beside the railroad one to supply stone for buildings.

At the end of the nine months the railroad was completed and in operation.

It gave a boom to Brentwood industries.

Several new factories were established within the town limits, and others were expected to be built there.

Jack called regularly once a week on Cassie, and no other young man of her acquaintance had the ghost of a show in her estimation with our hero.

One morning Tom Harper rushed over to the Trent farm with the morning paper in his pocket.

"Heard the news, Jack?" he asked, in some excitement.

"What news?" inquired his chum.



"You haven't read the morning paper, then?"

"No. I'm almost too busy to read the paper. What's this news about? Another railroad going to be built to this town?"

"No. They had trouble in the State penitentiary yesterday and three prisoners escaped."

"You don't say. How did it occur?"

"You'd better read it for yourself," said Tom, handing him the paper and pointing out the story.

Jack read it.

"Gee whiz!" he exclaimed. "Mulbrook, Curley and Meiggs are the chaps who got away."

"That's what the paper says."

"I'm sorry those were the ones who escaped."

"So am I, for they've got it in for both of us."

"They won't dare come to this locality. It would be too risky for them."

"You can't tell what such chaps might do."

"That's quite true, but I don't think they'll take the chances of recognition in this locality."

"They could disguise themselves, couldn't they?"

"Yes, they could do that, I suppose."

"Well, I think we'd better keep our eyes peeled for possible trouble. Forewarned is forearmed."

Jack agreed that it was well for them both to keep on their guard.

It was about this time that Tom's boss was employed by the Government to take part in an extensive surveying expedition in the far west, and Tom was told that he would have to look out for another situation.

"So you're out of a job, eh?" said Jack, when his friend came over to the farm and told him the news.

"I will be at the end of this week," replied Tom, gloomily.

"Well, you've got \$2,500 in bank, so you're not so badly off."

"That's all right, but I don't want to be out of work just the same."

"How would you like to work for me, Tom?"

"First-rate. Can you give me something to do?"

"Yes, I can make you timekeeper and general clerk at the quarry."

"That will suit me all right."

"Your wages will be \$9 a week."

"That's satisfactory. It's two dollars more than I've been getting."

"Then you can come to work on Monday morning."

"I'll be on hand, bet your life!"

So Tom went to work for Jack Street, and thenceforth the boys saw more of each other than they formerly did.

Tom was not a boy to take any advantage of his chum's friendship, but worked as faithfully for him as he would have done for a perfect stranger.

One morning about a week or ten days after Tom entered Jack's employ, a heavily bearded man, clad in rough garments, applied to the foreman of the quarry for a job.

It happened a man had left the day before, and the foreman took the stranger on.

Jack noticed the new man, and once or twice it occurred to him that he had seen this individual before, but still he could not place him, nor did he try very hard to do so, as he had no interest in the identity of his quarrymen, for he was not brought into direct communication with them.

The new man, who went down in the time-book as Luke Bradley, worked steadily all day.

His whole attention seemed to be absorbed in his work, yet had he been closely watched it might have been noticed that his eyes and ears were constantly on the alert, particularly when Jack and Tom were around the quarry.

When the foreman sent a couple of hands for sticks of dynamite to load a blast, he managed to slip away and find out where the explosive was stored.

No one, however, appeared to notice anything suspicious about his actions, and when the gang knocked off for the day, he put on his coat and quietly departed.

He went down the road a short distance to a shanty that had not been occupied for any purpose for a long time, and marching up to the closed door he gave a peculiar rap on the wood.

In a few minutes the door was opened and he was admitted.

The entrance was then bolted, a wooden bar put across it, and the person who had let him in followed him into the room to the right of the squalid entry.

There was a small, flat stove in one corner of the room with a fire in it, and another man was superintending the preparation of a meal.

The plain deal table that stood in the middle of the apartment was covered with a newspaper in lieu of a tablecloth, and on it were spread three plates, with a cup and saucer, and a knife, a fork and spoon beside each.

A paper bag full of sugar stood in the center of the table, and there was a small, cracked jug containing milk beside it.

The other two men wore beards somewhat similar to Bradley's, though not quite as thick nor as black.

A close observer might have had his suspicions aroused as to the genuineness of these hairy appendages, for they did not appear as natural as they ought to.

That they actually were false was soon demonstrated when the meal was put on the table, for then each man deftly removed his beard in order to eat with more freedom, and then it appeared that the man who had given his name as Bradley at the quarry was none other than Jim Mulbrook, and his companions were Dave Curley and William Meiggs—escaped convicts all.

## CHAPTER XII.

### TWO DIABOLICAL SCHEMES.

When Tom Harper took down the name of the new man at the quarry that morning, something warned him against the fellow.

Just why his suspicions were aroused he could not say.



Two or three times he was on the point of calling Jack's attention to the new employee, but as he could not give any real reason for his feelings on the subject he was ashamed to bring the matter up.

Nevertheless he felt uneasy all the afternoon, and took occasion to go into the quarry a number of times and look at Bradley in a careless way.

The man always seemed to be working as industriously as the rest of the gang, and Tom retired without having obtained any further light on the subject that bothered him.

"I don't see anything the matter with the fellow," he muttered to himself, after looking in at the quarry for the sixth time. "Yet I can't get the idea out of my mind that he isn't exactly what he seems. I wonder where he came from? The foreman doesn't know nor seem to care. He's satisfied as long as the chap does his work all right. I'd like to tell Jack, but I'm afraid he'd laugh at me. He'd say I'm not accustomed to seeing strange faces, and that my suspicions are all moonshine."

When the men knocked off at half-past five, Tom was standing at the door of the little office, close to the quarry, as Bradley went by on his way to the road.

Something about the man's walk and manner aroused Tom's suspicions anew.

"By Jingo!" muttered the boy. "I can't stand this. I'm going to find out something for myself about that chap before I go to supper. I'll just see where he's stopping in the neighborhood to begin with."

Tom got his hat and coat, locked up the office, and started after the new man.

"It won't do to let him know that he is being followed. I'll get behind the hedge."

When Bradley reached the road he looked around in a way that struck the boy as suspicious and then passed along up the highway.

The hedge that bordered the road was quite thick, and Tom had no difficulty in keeping out of sight.

Finally he saw Bradley enter the yard of the shanty that Tom knew to be unoccupied by a regular tenant.

"What the dickens does he want there?" the lad asked himself. "Why, he's knocking at the door. There must be somebody in the shanty at that rate. There he goes in. This looks mighty funny to me. There's smoke coming out of the chimney. Maybe the man has a wife and family and moved in this morning, and that he's all right after all. Well, I hope he is, but I can't help thinking he isn't. I'll make sure. It's almost dark. I can slip up to the back window and look in."

Tom hastened forward, and as he reached the fence on that side of the shanty he saw a wagon in the back yard.

He also heard the stamp of a horse's hoofs in a shed close by.

The rear window was boarded up at the bottom where two panes of glass were missing.

A light shone through the chinks and above the top board.

Tom got over the tumble-down fence and glided across the yard to the window.

He found a knot-hole that gave him a good view of the interior of the room.

The sight he saw inside fairly staggered him.

There were the three kidnappers that he and Jack had helped send to the penitentiary seated at a table in the middle of the room, eating their supper just as if they were honest citizens of the county and not three escaped convicts.

"Well, if that doesn't beat the Dutch!" gasped the boy. "That man Bradley is Jim Mulbrook for a fact. He went to work at the quarry for some purpose, that's evident, and whatever his object is it doesn't mean any good to Jack and me. That beard he wore as a disguise is lying on the table beside him. And the others have beards, too, which they've laid aside while they are eating. It was a providential thing I followed that fellow down here, or I should never have made this startling discovery. I must hear what they are talking about. It may give me a line on the game they are up to."

He put his ear to the knot-hole and listened attentively to the conversation going on within.

"Well, Mulbrook," Curley was saying, "what did you find out to-day?"

"I found out that that young monkey, Jack Street, is the actual owner of the granite quarry on the Trent farm."

"He is, eh?" exclaimed Curley. "Well, I'm blamed! We supposed his mother owned it, and that he was workin' for her."

"That other cub, Tom Harper, who helped him do us up that night you two fell into the quarry, is timekeeper and general clerk there, too."

"He is, eh? So much the better. Are you sure neither of them recognized you?"

"Quite sure of it."

"Good!"

"I discovered the little hut where the dynamite is stored. They have a watchman at night now. He is only a boy, and we'll have no difficulty getting away with him."

Curley nodded in a satisfied way.

"What's your plan for getting square with those cubs?" he asked.

"My scheme is this: Those two boys come to the little office near the quarry nearly every evening to work on the books and attend to other details of the business, which is booming just now. Although Street is the sole boss, the other chap pulls right in with him as if he was an equal partner. The three of us must go there to-night and first of all capture that young cub who acts as watchman. As soon as we have put him out of harm's way we'll go into the office and surprise Street and Harper. They haven't the least suspicion we're in this vicinity. In fact, I doubt if they have heard that we escaped from the jug up the State. We'll bind, gag and carry them to the hut where the dynamite is stored. After tying them so they can't escape, we'll lay a slow match for some little distance from



the hut and light the end of it. We'll time the fuse so as to give us time enough to get about half a mile away from the spot before the dynamite settles our score with them. How does that strike you, eh?"

This villainous scheme was proposed with a callousness that showed what a consummate scoundrel Jim Mulbrook was, and Tom, outside the window, fairly shivered at the fiendishness of the plot.

Curley and Meiggs immediately expressed their approval of the contemplated crime.

They hated the two boys as bitterly as Mulbrook did, and to their fancy no fate was too horrible to hand out to the plucky lads who had captured them, and assisted in their conviction and incarceration for a long term in the penitentiary, from which they had just escaped through one of those peculiar circumstances that occasionally crop up in State prisons.

"We're with you, Mulbrook," said Curley. "It will be some satisfaction to gloat over them when they see that their minutes on this earth are numbered."

"You bet your life," nodded Meiggs, with a sardonic grin. "I ain't forgotten how Street dragged me about that night on my twisted leg."

"Then we're all of one mind, are we?" asked Mulbrook.

"Aye, aye," replied his associates unanimously.

"Now that we've disposed of that matter let us figure on the other scheme we have in view," went on Mulbrook, drawing a pipe from his pocket, filling it with tobacco and lighting it from the wick of the candle which furnished the illumination of the room.

"You mean the railroad job, don't you?" asked Meiggs, getting out his pipe and going through the same performance.

"What else should I mean?"

"That's right," nodded Curley, producing a pipe, too, and joining the other smokers.

"Well," continued Mulbrook, "the best place to do the trick is close to the cut, about two miles south of Parsons' farm. It's a lonesome spot, with not a house in sight. If the locomotive was to leave the track there it would dump the train, or the front part of it at least if a coupling broke, down into the valley sixty feet below. The cars would be smashed into kindling wood and the engine would go to the junk pile."

"I guess that's right," nodded Curley, blowing a cloud of smoke from his lips.

"The train due at Brentwood at 11.10 every night carries a couple of strong boxes filled with money and coin sent through from Bridgewater to the Brentwood National Bank and the Trust Company. Those boxes we want to get hold of."

"Bet your life we do," interjected Meiggs.

"After we've disposed of the young jiggers at the quarry we'll drive down to the cut in our team, draw the spikes out of the fish-plates that hold down a couple of the rails, leaving the rails in their place so the engineer won't notice that there is anything the matter with the track. We've

got the tools to do it with in the wagon. When the engine strikes the loosened rails they'll spread at once, the locomotive will jump the track, and the train will sail over into the valley."

"Correct," agreed Meiggs.

"We'll be on hand at a convenient spot in the valley, ready to drive up in the wagon when the crash comes. We'll make a dash for the remains of the baggage car, yank out the strong boxes and load them on to the team, for they're not too heavy to be easily handled. Then we'll come back here as fast as we can, break open the boxes, divide the swag and light out for St. Louis or some other point west."

Mulbrook paused and looked at his associates.

"That scheme is all right," said Curley. "I'm with you in it."

"And you can count on me, too," put in Meiggs.

"Then there's nothing more to be said on the subject," remarked Mulbrook, knocking the ashes from his pipe and returning it to his pocket. "Now, let's get ready for our night's work. You hitch up the team, Meiggs. When you've done that and fetched it around to the road in front just let us know and we'll be ready to start for the quarry."

The three men arose from the table, which was a signal for Tom Harper to take his ear from the knot-hole and get on the other side of the fence as fast as his legs could carry him.

"Well, talk about desperate scoundrels," breathed the boy as he hurried along toward the Trent farm to communicate the startling news to Jack, "I guess those three chaps take the medal. So they mean to blow Jack and me up with dynamite to-night, do they? I'm thinking they'll meet with the surprise of their lives in trying to carry out that little scheme. How lucky it was that my suspicions were aroused about that bogus Bradley. And to think he was so well disguised that neither Jack nor I was able to recognize his real identity. Those villians think nothing of taking a human life. Why, if they succeeded in their design upon the railroad probably fifty people would be killed and maimed. It's up to Jack and me to land them back in the State prison, and I reckon we're able to do it all right."

In his hurry and excitement, however, Tom, who was taking a short cut across the fields, didn't notice in the darkness a deep gully that lay in his path until he suddenly pitched forward into the hole.

He struck his head against a hard root, rolled over and lay unconscious.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### IN THE DYNAMITE HUT.

At half-past seven Jack left the house for the little office near the quarry.

He had waited half an hour for Tom to call and accompany him, but when his chum failed to show up he went to the office alone.

It was a cloudy night and consequently a dark one.

A cool breeze swept through the branches of the trees,



and they nodded at him in the gloom as if they recognized his importance as the smartest boy in the county.

As he approached the office door he looked around for the bright rays of the lantern which always hung after dark at the entrance to the quarry.

Jack was greatly surprised to find it absent on this occasion.

The first thing that Harry Bassett, the sixteen-year-old lad who filled the post of night watchman, did when he came on duty every evening was to light that lantern and hang it in its accustomed place.

He had never been known to fail in this before.

The circumstance was all the stranger from the fact that before Jack went to supper he visited the quarry and saw Bassett lighting the lamp in the shed.

So instead of entering the office Jack continued on to the quarry to see if he could find out why the lantern was not in its place.

The quarry was as dark and silent as the grave.

There was no sign of Harry Bassett anywhere.

Jack then went on to the hut where the dynamite was stored, thinking the watcher might be going his round in that neighborhood.

As he walked that way three shadows dogged his steps in the gloom, stealthily closing in on him, until they were close behind him when he reached the hut.

Harry Bassett was nowhere in sight here either.

"It's strange where he can be," mused Jack. "This isn't like Harry at all. The absence of that lantern is the funniest part of it. He has strict orders to keep it burning at the entrance to the quarry from dusk to dawn. Now it is not only not hanging in its place, but Harry himself is missing, too. What can it mean?"

As he turned about to retrace his steps, he was seized behind by a powerful grip and a leathery hand closed upon his mouth.

A pair of hands seized his legs and he was thrown roughly upon the ground with a force sufficient to jar his whole body.

Then from out the darkness loomed a third shadow which proceeded to bind the struggling boy hand and foot, and finally to gag him.

He was yanked around behind the hut and the lantern which belonged at the quarry entrance was produced from under the folds of a coat which had effectually hidden its light until this moment.

It was flashed in Jack's face, but at the same time it revealed to the prisoner three bearded faces gathered close around him.

"It seems we've got you at last," said Jim Mulbrook, in a tone of malignant satisfaction. "This time you won't trip us up like you did twice before. This time it is our innings. We've a long score to settle with you, young man—a score which only your death will wipe out. I can see by your eyes that it has dawned upon you at last who we are. For fear you might entertain any doubt on the subject I will tell you that my name is Jim Mulbrook and that

these are my pals, Dave Curley and Bill Meiggs. You thought you were rid of us for a matter of ten years or so, didn't you? You thought that once the doors of the penitentiary had closed upon us we were dead to the world until we had served our time. Well, you see you were mistaken. Only nine months have passed and we are back again at our old stamping ground—back again to repay you and your friend Harper the debt we owe you. How do you like the prospect that's before you, eh? Perhaps you're thinking that kid watchman of yours will discover how things are and give the alarm? Don't you believe it. We made it our business to catch him first of all. He's lying bound and gagged behind the shed, and he knows if he turns over he'll fall into the creek. We've got you where the hair is short, and we're only waiting for that cub Harper to turn up to hand you both out your quietus."

"Your name is mud this time, all right," jeered Curley, thrusting his ugly mug closer to the helpless boy. "I ain't forgotten how you lamed my shoulder that night you fired the rocks at me and Meiggs."

"Nor I ain't forgotten the two punches you gave me in the doorway of the house when you cut your lucky with the girl; nor the cut in the head I got from one of them stones; nor the rough handling you and Harper gave me after I sprained my leg in the quarry. I ain't forgot nothin'," and the speaker, William Meiggs, grinned malevolently in Jack's face.

"That'll do," said Mulbrook, impatiently. "You've said enough to him for the present. Go back and watch near the office for the other chap. He ought to be along by this time. Maybe you'll find him inside at his desk. When you get him hustle him out here. We can't waste any time over this job, for we've got the railroad matter ahead of us, and the train won't wait for us. It will take us a little time to doctor the rails and get back down into the valley. I'll stay here and watch this kid. If Harper doesn't turn up in fifteen minutes, as near as you can guess, we'll have to let him go and make this chap pay the grudge we owe both."

So Curley and Meiggs departed on their errand, and Jim Mulbrook, lighting his pipe, sat down beside his prisoner and smoked in silence.

As for Jack he was fairly staggered by the situation in which he so unexpectedly found himself.

While he knew that these men had escaped from prison, he did not dream they would dare come back to the scene of their kidnapping exploit.

They had come, however, and he was in their hands.

What they were going to do with him he could not guess; but he was afraid their intentions were pretty serious.

The minutes went by slowly as he lay helpless on the ground, while Mulbrook smoked his pipe and looked out over the dark landscape.

At length Curley and Meiggs returned without Tom Harper.

"I guess he isn't goin' to turn out to-night," said Curley. "We waited a good fifteen minutes and didn't see no sign of him."



"All right," answered Mulbrook, putting up his pipe. "He's a lucky boy. He'll never know what he missed by staying away. We can't wait for him any longer."

He walked around to the front of the hut, took a steel jimmy from his pocket and broke the lock on the door.

Pushing it open he called for the lantern.

Curley brought it to him.

"Don't follow me in, but hold it up so I can see what I'm doing."

He entered the hut and hunted around till he found a pile of fuse.

He unrolled a long piece of the stuff, attached one end of it to the short fuse of a dynamite cartridge which he laid carefully on the ground, and then came out of the hut and walked away to a distance with the other end of the fuse.

"Now fetch the kid around and tie him to that box of dynamite in the hut," he said when he came back.

Meiggs and Curley picked Jack up and bore him into the small structure.

"Young man," said Mulbrook, after his companions had carried out his directions, "I s'pose you know where you are—in the dynamite hut. Do you see that cartridge attached to that fuse? Of course you do. I'm going to place that right among the rest of the dynamite in that box. After we leave the hut one of us selected by lot is going to light the other end of that fuse. It will take fifteen to twenty minutes to burn its way into this place. You'll have that long to live, and then there won't be enough of you left to make a decent funeral. This is our revenge. How do you like it, eh? Think it over while the fuse is eating its way toward you and—say your prayers. Come, pals, we've wasted all the time we can afford on this job. The dynamite must do the rest. Good night, you confounded young cub, and a rapid journey for you into the next world."

Curley and Meiggs laughed derisively, then the door was slammed shut, a rock rolled against it, and Jack Street was left face to face with a horrible fate.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### SAVED FROM A TERRIBLE FATE.

How long Tom Harper lay unconscious in the narrow gully into which his reckless feet had plunged him the boy never knew.

He came to himself after awhile and his first impression was that of wonder at finding himself in such a situation.

He picked himself up as soon as he could and crawled out of the hole.

By the time his feet touched the level ground above he remembered that he had stumbled into the gully in his hurry to reach Jack and tell him what he had seen and heard in the deserted shanty up the road.

"The more haste they say is the worst speed," he muttered, as he continued on his way much more cautiously than before, for the gloom of the night and the severe pain in his head from the blow he had received on his skull,

bothered him greatly. "I hope I didn't lie long in that gully. I want to warn Jack of our danger and help him make preparations to capture those rascals off their guard as we did before. I wonder what time it is? It looks late to me. I hope I'll find Jack at the house."

Jessie answered his impatient knock on the kitchen door.

"Is Jack in?" he inquired.

"Why no. He waited until half-past seven for you and then went to the office. You'll find him there. Why, what's the matter with you, Tom? You've got a cut on your forehead, and there's blood on your ear. Then your clothes look as if you'd been rolling in the dirt. Have you met with an accident?"

"I fell into a gully on the other side of your boundary fence. It don't amount to anything."

"Come in and let me brush you off and put a piece of courtplaster on your forehead," said Jessie.

"Can't wait for that now. What time is it?"

"It's nearly half-past eight."

"Half-past eight!" gasped Tom. "Good gracious!"

Without another word he turned around and started for the office as fast as he could run, while Jessie looked after him not a little astonished.

"There isn't any light in the office," he breathed, when he came in sight of the window of the little frame building. "I guess Jack didn't come here after all. Or if he did, he didn't stay long."

He kept on, however, and when he reached the office he tried the door.

It was locked as he expected.

"Why, where's the quarry lantern? It isn't hanging in its place. That's funny. Everything is dark and silent as a graveyard down here. I don't like the look of this. Those rascals must have been here. Maybe they're skulking around here now."

The very idea of meeting the scoundrels in that lonely spot in the dark made him shiver.

"Where can Harry Bassett be? There's something wrong as sure as I'm alive. Half-past eight o'clock! My goodness! I must have been nearly two hours and a half in that gully, for it wasn't more than six o'clock when I was listening to those men under the shanty window. That would give them loads of time to come here and capture both Jack and Bassett. Maybe they did that and are now looking for me. I must be cautious. I'll sneak around the back of the shed toward the dynamite hut and see if they're hanging around in that neighborhood."

He followed out this plan, and was part of the way round when he almost tripped over something soft lying in his path.

His heart gave a great bound, for he thought at first he had stumbled upon one of the rascals hiding there, and he expected the fellow to jump up and make a grab at him.

Nothing of the kind happened, but instead he heard a muffled groan.



"What's that?" he said, stooping down and feeling of the object.

His hand came into contact with a human leg.

"Great Scott! Who can this be? Jack—bound and gagged? I hardly think so."

He ventured to strike a match.

"Why, it's Harry Bassett!"

He got out his knife in a twinkling and in a moment or two he had the quarry watcher free.

"What does this mean, Harry?" he asked excitedly.

Bassett's story confirmed Tom's worst fears.

"Those scoundrels have been here, I see. Seen any—think of Jack, Harry?"

"No. He hadn't come when those men jumped on me and put me out here."

"Come; we must look Jack up. They may have caught him. You've got your revolver, haven't you? Or did they take it from you?"

"No, I've got it. They didn't bother searching me."

"That's good. Get it out. If we meet those villains don't hesitate to fire at them. If you're afraid to do it let me have your gun."

"I'm not afraid to shoot, for they have no business around here."

"Follow me, then, and keep your eyes skinned for danger."

They emerged from around the other end of the shed and advanced toward the dynamite shed with great caution.

No one seemed to be in sight, but they were taking no chances.

Gradually they circled around the shed where the terrible explosive was stored.

Finally they came out in front of it.

"What's that?" exclaimed Tom, gazing in open-eyed wonder at a bright spot on the ground near the door of the shed that was spitting out tiny sparks as it crawled along in the darkness. "Looks like a glowworm, doesn't it?"

The astonished lads gazed at it for a few minutes, then Tom walked up close to it so as to examine it better.

"I never saw anything like that before," he said, putting his foot in front of it.

He stepped on something that felt like a soft cord.

Stooping down his fingers came in contact with the substance.

He picked it up and the glowing object came up with it.

"Great heaven!" he cried. "This is a lighted fuse, and making straight for the door of the shed."

The perspiration oozed out on his forehead, so startled was he.

His fingers relaxed and the fuse dropped to the ground.

Harry Bassett jumped on the sputtering light and began to squeeze it out with his feet.

While he was thus engaged Tom recovered his self-possession, pulled out his knife and cut the fuse in two to make certain it would do no harm.

"Those rascals intended to blow up the shed from the

looks of things. Look at that stone rolled against the door. They broke the lock to get in."

"I'll run to the quarry entrance and get the lantern," said Bassett.

"You won't find it there."

"Why not?" the boy asked in surprise.

"Because it's been taken away. There's a spare one in the shed. Those villains have probably gone away, so I guess it will be safe for you to venture over there and get it. Don't light it till you get back here."

Harry Bassett walked away into the darkness, leaving Tom to await his return with the lantern.

Tom rolled the rock away from the door of the hut and looked in.

"If those chaps had caught Jack and me they intended—what's that?"

He heard a rustling sound on the floor at the further end of the hut.

Just then Bassett ran up.

"I stumbled over the quarry lantern about a dozen feet away from here," he said. "The light had been blown out and it was lying on its side."

"Well, light it quick. There's some live thing inside of the hut."

"What makes you think there is?" asked Bassett, as he struck a match and lit the wick.

"I heard a rustling noise in the corner."

"Maybe a rabbit got in there."

The boys entered the hut and Bassett flashed the light around.

They were both staggered to see Jack bound and gagged alongside of the case of dynamite.

"Great Scott!" gasped Tom.

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Bassett.

They rushed forward, and while the young watchman held the lantern aloft, Tom cut his chum's lashings and relieved his mouth of the gag.

Then he helped Jack to his feet.

"So those rascals caught you and were going to blow you up!" cried Tom.

"How did you guess that?"

"Because I overheard their whole plot, and if I hadn't tumbled into a gully in the adjoining field this never would have happened, but we probably would have captured the villains between us as we did before."

Tom then told his story—how he had suspected the new man, Bradley, who came to work at the quarry that morning; how he had shadowed him, when he went off at half-past five, to the vacant shanty up the road; what he had seen and heard through the knot-hole, and lastly, his own misadventure as he was hurrying across the fields to get the news to Jack as soon as he could.

"When I came to my senses I hastened to your house. Your sister told me you had gone to the office an hour before. I was staggered to think I had lost more than two hours' time in that gully. I feared the rascals had been here, especially when I found the lantern missing from



the mouth of the quarry. The fact that the office was dark and locked made me believe that you had changed your mind and gone off somewhere, and thus escaped the scoundrels. In my effort to see if those men were hiding near this hut, and at the same time to avoid possible discovery by them, I walked around the back of the shed. I found Harry lying on the ground there, bound and gagged, and I hurriedly released him. After that we both came here and discovered a lighted fuse crawling along the ground toward the shed. We soon put it out, and then we came in here and discovered you."

Jack then told his story, from the moment he left the house until the rascals left him helpless in the hut with the vision of a terrible death before his eyes.

"And now," said Jack, "we must notify the police at once that these convicts are hanging around this neighborhood intent on doing you and I bodily harm."

"We haven't the time to do that now," replied Tom. "We must hustle down to the cut near Parsons' farm and save the 11.10 train from being wrecked by those scoundrels. The three of us will go. Get your revolver from the house; mine is in the office, and Harry has his in his pocket. Bassett and I will harness the colt to the light wagon while you are after your gun. We ought to be able to reach the cut in time to head those villains off and, if possible, capture them."

"All right," agreed Jack, and the three started at once for the farm-yard.

## CHAPTER XV.

### AVERTING A RAILROAD DISASTER.

Fifteen minutes later the three boys drove out through the front gate and started the colt at her best speed for the railway cut beyond Parsons' farm.

It took three-quarters of an hour for them to reach a point in the valley within a quarter of a mile of the track, which ran along the hillside, sixty feet or so above.

They reined in, jumped out and tied the colt to a convenient tree.

As they crossed the valley road they saw a horse and wagon tied to the rail fence.

There was no one near it.

"That's their team," said Tom, who recognized the wagon. "They're up on the line now attending to their dastardly work."

"We must advance with caution, then," replied Jack, drawing his revolver, an example followed by his companions.

"As they are desperate ruffians, we must not hesitate to fire upon them if they refuse to yield or try to get away. We must capture them at any hazard, Jack, for our lives are in danger as long as they are at large."

"That's right," answered Jack. "We are up against a tough proposition and we can't afford to take any chances. I shall shoot to kill, if necessary—you two must do the same. These scoundrels deserve no consideration at all after their villainous attempt on my life, which would have

succeeded had you not reached me in time to put out that fuse."

They began to climb the hillside near the entrance to the cut.

When they reached the track they saw no signs of the rascals.

"The night is so plaguey dark we can't see very far ahead. It will be of advantage to us, however. They won't be able to detect us, either. Now let us walk ahead, but keep close to the hill on the inside of the track. Follow me."

Jack led the way, with Tom and Bassett at his heels.

Each had his revolver cocked in his hand, fully prepared for instant action.

Presently they heard the sounds on the rails ahead.

"They're working at the track," whispered Jack, coming to a pause. "I should think they are about fifty feet away."

The boys advanced with greater caution than before until they made out the indistinct forms of three men ahead, doing something to the rails.

"There they are," said Jack. "Get down and creep upon them."

They were within a dozen feet of the train-wreckers when they heard Mulbrook say:

"That will do, now. The train will soon be here. We must get down into the valley quick."

The rascals threw down their sledge-hammers and crow-bar and started to leave the scene.

"Halt!" cried Jack, rising to his feet in front of them. "Surrender, or we'll fire!"

Mulbrook, who was in advance, uttered a curse and raised something he carried under his arm.

Jack's sharp eyes saw it was a gun, and, quick as lightning, to save his own life, he fired point-blank at the villain.

Mulbrook threw up his hands with a cry, the gun fell from his hands, and, staggering backward, he toppled over the embankment and went rolling down to the valley.

The others, paralyzed by their leader's fate, started to run up the track, but two revolvers, in the hands of Tom and Harry, cracked sharply on the night air, and two bullets hummed so close to the heads of the villains that they stopped and threw up their hands as a token of surrender.

Jack held them under the muzzle of his gun, while Tom and Bassett bound their hands behind their backs.

"Now march over to that boulder!" ordered Jack, and they marched. "Harry," continued the young leader, "keep your eyes and your revolver on these fellows while Tom and I see if we can fix the track."

Jack and his chum felt they had not a moment to lose, as the 11.10 train for Brentwood was almost due now at the cut.

They ran to the spot where the rascals had loosened the rails, and found that three rails had been tampered with.

Fortunately, the spikes which had been drawn out of the fish-plates lay close by.



"Grab a hammer and we'll drive them back again," said Jack.

They worked with feverish eagerness, for a mile away came a long, shrill whistle as the train passed a railroad crossing.

The ring of their hammer strokes awoke the echoes of the night air and the solitude of the hillside.

There were still several spikes to drive when they heard the hum of the coming train on the rails.

"Are you nearly done?" asked the perspiring Jack. "The engine will be upon us in a moment or two."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the air quivered under the sharp shriek that the engineer let off as he approached the mouth of the cut.

"Hurry up, Tom," cried Jack, "we've barely time to finish this job!"

The two boys got an extra hustle on, and Jack was giving the final tap to the last spike when the locomotive came in sight around the curve.

The brilliant glare of the headlight revealed the boys as they threw down the hammers and backed away.

The startled engineer whistled down brakes, and reversed the lever, while he applied the air-brakes so hard that the cars began to bump against one another, and the passengers got the shaking up of their lives.

Nothing could stop the train's progress that side of the cut, however, and it swept by, the tightened wheels groaning and sliding along, throwing out myriads of sparks as the brakes held grimly to their stern duty.

The frightened passengers threw up the windows and looked out as the train slackened up and finally came to a stop.

The conductor jumped out and ran to the cab for an explanation.

The engineer told him what he had seen.

With his lantern slung over his arm, the conductor started back for the scene of the trouble.

Jack and Tom were waiting for him.

They explained the situation in a few words and pointed to the bound men held up by Bassett's revolver near a big boulder.

The conductor was clearly startled by the narrow escape the train had from destruction, and praised the boys for their prompt and plucky conduct in frustrating the terrible scheme.

He waved his lantern and the train backed down.

The prisoners were turned over to him and hoisted into the baggage car, whence, on the arrival of the train in Brentwood, they were transferred to the station-house.

The boys returned to the valley and hunted for the body of Jim Mulbrook.

He was unconscious, but not dead.

They carried him to the wagon that had brought the rascals to the scene of their attempted crime, and Jack and Tom mounted to the seat, after Bassett had been instructed to drive their own wagon to the farm and put the colt in the stable.

Jack drove on into town to the station-house, where the dangerously wounded convict was turned over to the authorities, and the boys gave their statement of the attempted wrecking of the 11.10 train.

Mulbrook subsequently died of his injuries, and the other rascals were returned to the penitentiary.

As a reward of \$500 each had been offered by the State for their recapture, this sum was paid over to and divided among Jack, Tom and Harry Bassett.

The Board of Directors of the M. & N. Railroad awarded \$5,000 to the boys also for saving the train at the cut, of which Jack and Tom each got \$2,000, while Bassett received \$1,000.

Altogether it proved to be a good night's work for the brave lads, though Jack declared he wouldn't go through his experience in the dynamite hut again for ten times the amount he got out of the affair.

Some time during the following year, Jack, through his mother, purchased a fine cottage within half a mile of the quarry, and the Street family went there to live.

The quarry proved to be a winner, and when Jack reached his twenty-first year he was earning a handsome income out of it, and Tom was earning good salary from his generous chum.

Soon afterward the following item appeared in the new morning Record newspaper:

Married.—At the residence of the bride's parents, No. — Brentwood Avenue, on Wednesday evening, Cassie, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Willard Davenport, to John Spencer Street. The bride is the only child and heiress of the president of the Brentwood National Bank. The bridegroom is one of Brentwood's rising young citizens. He is the owner of the Trent Granite Quarry on the county road.

Then followed a description of the bride's costume and the gowns of the ladies present, together with a full list of the guests at the bridal function.

After a three months' wedding tour Jack and his charming wife returned to Brentwood and took up their home with Mr. and Mrs. Davenport until such time as he should build a brand-new house of his own.

Jack, of course, will never be otherwise than OUT FOR HIMSELF, since he is his own boss, but he is still PAVING HIS WAY TO FORTUNE.

THE END.

Read "DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND; OR, THE BOY BROKERS OF WALL STREET," which will be the next number (64) of "Fame and Fortune Weekly."

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